



2012

invisible Margin: Marginalization and Activism of Adivasi Women in Researches in Bangladesh

Aanmona Priyadarshini
Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation

Priyadarshini, Aanmona, "invisible Margin: Marginalization and Activism of Adivasi Women in Researches in Bangladesh" (2012).
Master's Theses. Paper 827.
http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/827

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).
Copyright © 2012 Aanmona Priyadarshini

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“INVISIBLE MARGIN”: MARGINALIZATION AND ACTIVISM OF ADIVASI
WOMEN IN RESEARCHES IN BANGLADESH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDANCY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN WOMEN’S STUDIES AND GENDER STUDIES

BY

AANMONA PRIYADARSHINI

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2012

Copyright by Aanmona Priyadarshini, 2012
All rights reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of the people who made this thesis possible, starting with my wonderful professors in the Women's Studies and Gender Studies Program at Loyola University Chicago. I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Prudence Moylan. Her sage advice has put me back on track when I veered precipitously away from my early goals, and her friendship and encouragement have made the difference in this long and arduous process. Dr. Colette Morrow, the reader of my thesis, proved an excellent sounding board for me from the beginning of my time here and helped me for exploring new ideas and encountering new challenges.

I would also like to thank Loyola University Chicago and Institute of International Education (IIE) for providing the funds to complete my research and writing. Two years Fellowship and tuition award during the 2010-2012 academic years allowed me to make discernable progress on my master's study and research.

I would like to thank my ex-professor Dr. Ainoon Naher. Without her support I would never have made it where I am today. Her constant encouragement has made me believe that I can be the one who I want to be. Finally, I want to give thanks to my indigenous friends, who have made me able to do this research by providing researches data from Bangladesh. I would like to give my thanks to Hari Kishore Chakma, Kabita Chakma, Shashwati Chakma, whose support gave me strength when I needed that.

Moreover, I want to give my warm loves to all of my indigenous people, whose life struggles have prepared me for starting a battle, a battle for establishing justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
CHAPTER ONE: UNPACKING THE SELF AND EXPLORING THE VISION	1
Literature Review	3
Major Points of Research	6
Theoretical and Methodological Overview	6
CHAPTER TWO: KNOWING FROM HISTORY	10
Knowing the “Other”	11
“Othering” through Militarization	18
Invisible “Other”	22
CHAPTER THREE: PEACE IS NOT FOR WOMEN: A STORY OF GENDERED PEACE ACCORD	27
Known Part of the Peace Accord	27
Peace is not for Adivasi Women	30
CHAPTER FOUR: REFUGEE IN OWN LAND	35
Eviction of Adivasi People from Their Land	35
“The Land Is Mine Too”	38
CHAPTER FIVE: “LIVES ARE NOT OURS”: VIOLENCE AGAINST ADIVASI PEOPLE	43
Mainstream Analysis of Violence	43
Unseen Violence to Adivasi Women	45
Sexual Violence Against Adivasi Women	47
Post-violence Vulnerabilities of Adivasi women	51
CHAPTER SIX: INVISSIBLE ACTORS IN POLITICS OF NATIONALISM	58
Rhetoric of Nationalism	58
Adivasi Women’s Invisibility in the Politics of Nationalism	62
Rising from Ashes: Unseen Activisms of Adivasi Women	66
CHAPTER SEVEN: FROM MARGIN TO CENTER	73
Problems for Establishing Solidarity	74
From Differences to Commonalities	79
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY	96
VITA	101

CHAPTER ONE

UNPACKING THE SELF AND EXPLORING THE VISION

On the one hand (the Adivasi¹ woman in Bangladesh faces) the stream roller of rape, torture, sexual harassment, humiliation and helplessness inflicted by the military and Bengalis, and on the other hand, she faces the curse of social and sexual discrimination.²

This statement was made by Kalpana Chakma, the Adivasi woman activist in Bangladesh, who was abducted in June 12, 1996 and still now is missing. Her own life tragedy and her depictions of the realities of Adivasi women's lives explore the marginalization of Adivasi women in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. In the context of the historical marginalization of Adivasi people from diverse ethnic communities in Bangladesh, this study will investigate how mainstream researches and writings, in books, research reports, on Adivasi issues have ignored women's relegation by equating women's distinctive problems with communities' marginalization.

Through this research I will explore Adivasi women's subordination in diverse sphere of life and their activism against the power structure that mainstream researches have overlooked. I will also investigate the possible pathways of solidarity to challenge the systems of power that create control over Adivasi people's lives. Thus this research will address following research questions: How does mainstream research and writing

¹ The term "Adivasi" is used in Bangladesh as a synonym of "indigenous" people.

² Meghna Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," in *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, ed. Philip Gain (Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2000), 91.

on Adivasi people's deprivation demonstrate a patriarchal point of views? How and why is the marginalization of Adivasi women more intense and different from communities' marginalization? How despite their active roles in social movement, do Adivasi women's activism remain unseen? Is intercommunity solidarity sufficient to end the power structure that discriminates against Adivasi people, especially women, or is transnational solidarity is necessary for broader social changes?

Feminist researches in recent periods focus on the interconnections between race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nationality and other social configurations to understand the unique nature of women's subordinations and resistances. This study will use intersectionality approach instead of merely focusing on the state and Bengali Muslim communities' domination over Adivasi people. It will show how ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality together shape Adivasi women's marginalization and activism against this marginalization, which has been ignored by majority of the academic and research initiatives undertaken in Bangladesh. This research will also argue for solidarity, based on common political cause, among marginalized people throughout the world based on their shared experiences for fostering broader social change. This is another issue that is not examined by scholars who focus on Adivasi people's lives in Bangladesh. My research may stimulate Adivasi women to make coalitions based on their shared experiences and raise their voices against the current power structure by fostering a movement, which will transcend racial, class, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Moreover, by recognizing race, gender, class and sexuality as an integrated part of structure of power, my research can explore multifaceted dimension of realities in Adivasi women's lives in Bangladesh, which typically are unseen and unheard.

Literature Review

The problem of this study – how mainstream researches and writings have overlooked violence and discrimination against Adivasi women in CHT, Bangladesh – is fundamentally shaped by its historical context. There are unequal power relationships, tensions, and conflicts between and among Adivasi and Bengali communities, as well as political and social marginalization and military aggression against the Adivasi hill people. Though violation of Adivasi people's human rights is pervasive in Bangladesh some researches have only recently begun to address this concern. Among these researches, most focus on the overall marginalization of Adivasi communities rather than women's situation.

Some of the researches, for example, the work of Gain³ and Roy⁴, focus on how the state deprives Adivasi people by displacing them from their ancestor's lands. The researches show the reasons and natures of conflicts between Adivasi communities and the state, multinational organizations, all of whom compete for control over and access to land and natural resources. But, none of these works explore how conflicts over land affects Adivasi women. Some researches, for example, Rashiduzzaman,⁵ and Panday and Jamil,⁶ investigate the inherent flaws in the CHT Accord that was signed by both

³ Philip Gain, "Researved Forests Complicate Land Issues," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010).

⁴ Devasish Roy, "Resisting Onslaught on Forest Commons in Post-Accord CHT," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010).

⁵ M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord: Institute Features and Strategic Concerns," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 7 (1998).

⁶ Pranab Kumar Panday and Ishtiaq Jamil, "Conflicts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An Unimplemented Accord and Continued Violence," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (2009).

Adivasi leaders and state in 1997 and explore the failure of Peace Accord, violations of human rights in postaccord eras and the problems and barriers for the implementation of the peace Accord. These researches do not investigate how Adivasi women's problems are absent from the peace Accord. Similarly, Mohsin⁷ and Schendel⁸ explore the politics of nationalism and activism of Adivasi political groups. But they do not mention Adivasi women's activism in the context of national and local politics in Bangladesh. All of these works address the issues—violations of human rights, genocide, and massacre in CHT. However, some of the studies merely mention sexual violence against Adivasi women without considering the long-term socio-political, physical and mental consequences of this violence. The commonalities between all of these researches are that they all try to analyze Adivasi people's marginalization from patriarchal point of view by focusing on Adivasi males' experiences and ignoring women's voices. Even when these researches considered Adivasi women's marginalization, instead of focusing on diverse socio-political sphere of lives, they just looked at women's sexual vulnerabilities. Secondly, none of these researches focus on the intersectional relationships among ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. Finally, none of these researches recommend creating solidarity across culture, nationality, ethnicity, and class to overcome this oppression.

My research project will add knowledge in this field by considering the interconnected nature of women's marginalization in diverse area of their lives, such as their displacement from ancestor's lands, erasure from the peace Accord, their

⁷ Amina Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*, Second ed. (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2002).

⁸ Willem van Schendel, Wolfgang Mey, and Aditya Kumar Dewan, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Living in a Borderland* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000).

experiences of sexual assault and violence, and their unrecognized activism. In this regard I will consider Guhathakurta's researches on Adivasi people of Bangladesh,⁹ which have used women's points of view to explore unheard and unseen gendered violence and marginalization as well as activism among Adivasi women. The second reason for my departing from traditional research is that I will consider the interrelated relationships between ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality for analyzing Adivasi women's marginalized positions in society. In this regard I will consider Collins's work on race, class, sexuality, and gender in the United States, which sees these distinctive systems of oppression as interlocking parts of one overarching structure of domination instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion.¹⁰ Thirdly, my research departs from traditional researches on Adivasi people in Bangladesh, as I will advocate for solidarity among Bengali and Adivasi women in Bangladesh as well as worldwide based on common political choice. At this point, I will consider Mohanty's work, as she believes that in order to effect social change women have to establish solidarity while recognizing their differences.¹¹ This solidarity will not depend on geography or any particular race or class group. Rather, it will transcend nation-states and communities' boundaries and bring women who share similar political interests into a common platform.

⁹ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances."

¹⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

¹¹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003). 225.

Major Points of Research

As was discussed earlier, this study will focus on three major areas. First, in order to analyze Adivasi people's subordination, I will explore the issues that mainstream researches and writings address. Displacement from land, socio-political barrier for the implementation of peace Accord, violation of human rights, and national and local politics and activism are the main area that mainstream researches have addressed to understand Adivasi communities and especially Adivasi men's subordination. Majority of the researches have not considered the distinctiveness of women's marginalization. This will lead me to my second quest, the investigation of how all of these issues have different affects on Adivasi women's lives, marginalization and activism. Finally, to overcome this situation I will advocate for solidarity between diverse ethnicities in Bangladesh and worldwide marginal people. As the structure of domination is too strong and broad, nothing can be achieved by establishing solidarity only within a single community. This does not mean that I will not recognize differences among diverse communities. Clearly, there are differences among different ethnic minority communities, but their common experiences of marginalization can open diverse paths to deal with the problems.

Theoretical and Methodological Overview:

To address the stated research objectives, I will use feminist standpoint epistemology and methodology and theoretical premises intersectionality. It is not possible to separate the methodology of Feminist Standpoint from its theoretical principle, as it is a theoretical and methodological whole where the philosophical premises lead to the methodological guidelines. Feminist standpoint epistemology and

methodology require that I begin with marginal people's lives, acknowledge my standpoint, account for the power structures that shape my research and recognize differences and agency among people whose experiences I have studied.¹²

Focusing on Adivasi women in Bangladesh, I believe that I begin with marginal women's lives, as these women are marginal in term of their ethnicity, class, gender and sexual identities. The research topic I have chosen is directly related to my social beliefs, ideologies, experiences and feminist stance. Being a Bengali woman, a member of minority Hindu community and lower-middle class I face sexual, religious, class and racial marginalization in Bangladesh as well as in the United States.

My marginal identities and experiences of oppression have shaped my interests to understand social identities and their marginalization within a complex, and interlocking system of oppression along the lines of race, gender, class and sexuality. By considering feminist theoretical premises of intersectionality, I want to analyze this marginalization within what Collins calls a “ ‘matrix of domination’ in which difference is conceptualized as a range of interlocking inequalities.”¹³ This conceptualization helps me avoid reinscribing the dominant view on social identities. It also helps me to grasp multiple perspectives on the marginalization of Adivasi women. Moreover, using feminist intersectional theoretical approaches, I will investigate pathways for establishing solidarity among marginal people from diverse background based on their common

¹² Kum-Kum Bhavnani, "Tracing theContours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity," in *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 67.

¹³ SN Hesse-Biber and ML Yaiser, "Difference Matters: Studying Across Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality," in *Feminist perspectives on social research*, ed. SN Hesse-Biber and ML Yaiser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 114.

political choices, so that they can challenge the power structure to foster boarder social change. This understanding and research modality will help me to consider my research subject as an actor with full of agency and potentialities.

In this research I am not doing any fieldwork by studying “real” people or participating in “real” field events to collect data. According to Schwara, there are two ways to collect data: discursive and communicative, where the first one is for the observation and evaluation of material sources like text and image and second one is based on active participation of the researcher in the research sites.¹⁴ My project will use the former means of collecting data. It will also employ ethnographic content analysis, which is a qualitative content analysis technique used to locate, identify, and thematically analyze texts to “document and understand the communication of meaning.”¹⁵ In contrast to the quantitative content analysis, which relies on hypothesis testing, deductive research and predetermined categories, ethnographic content analysis conceptualizes document analysis as fieldwork, allows concepts to emerge inductively, and insists on reflexivity and the interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis.¹⁶

For content analysis I will consider published sources such as journals, books, articles and electronic sources including blogs, organizational web pages and Bengali newspapers as my primary sources, which give me direct accessibility toward my research subject. These materials are relevant to my project for several reasons. First of

¹⁴ Stefan A. Schwara, "Ethnologie im Zeichen von Globalisierung und Cyberspace," *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 129(1999): 271.

¹⁵ David L. Altheide, "Ethnographic Content Analysis," *Qualitative Sociology* 10, no. 1 (1987): 68.

¹⁶ Ibid.

all, my research objective is to explore how mainstream researches and writings consider Adivasi women's marginality. To address this issue, I have to focus on these primary sources. Second, by exploring the real incidents, case studies and data about the subordination of Adivasi women, some of these primary sources will enable me to understand the contemporary realities of Adivasi women's lives in Bangladesh. Third, by revealing women's own experiences of marginalization, some of these sources will help me to grasp women's point of view instead of examining them through patriarchal perspectives. Therefore, the populations who are the focus of my project are positioned as partners in the research rather than as subjects in a hierarchically defined relationship between them and an external specialist. Furthermore, the knowledge that emerges from my research will be produced in community rather than individually.

CHAPTER TWO

KNOWING FROM HISTORY

Mainstream history is nothing more than a selection of facts, which are conditioned by the bestowed political interests of the dominant group – race, class or gender – to present a particular “image” of the past to the future, and to legitimize discriminated political moves.¹ When we are taught to learn from history we are being taught to look at the past from the standpoint of the powerful. However, knowing history does not mean we have to believe everything that is written down in the documents. Rather, it means to find out how and why a particular history was created in a certain period of time to assure certain interest, and it means analyzing present experiences of discrimination and dominations in the intermingling contexts of past and present. Therefore, in this chapter, I am going to explore the history that has been trying to establish Adivasi people in CHT, Bangladesh as “Other.”

Cartographic anxieties have been imprinted on the statecraft of South Asian states from its very inception.² One of the reasons behind these anxieties is laid in the action of nationalist leaders of South Asia who opted for the French model of nationhood for building their nation-states. According to Brubaker,

In the French Tradition, the nation has been conceived in relation to the institution and territorial frame of the state . . . Nationhood is centrally expressed

¹ Raymond Williams, "The Long Revolution," in *Theory of Criticism*, ed. Raman Senden (London: Longman, 1988), 41.

² Meghna Guhathakurta, "Cartographic Anxieties, Identity Politics and the Imperatives of Bangladesh Foreign Policy," *South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 2, no. 3 (2010): 1.

in the striving for cultural unity. Political inclusion has entailed cultural assimilation, for regional cultural minorities and immigrants alike.³

South Asian political elites have followed this model by choosing the dominant/majority community as the model nation and establishing a culturally homogenous population.⁴ Therefore, minority communities have encountered alienation from every sphere of lives and have become the “other” of the dominant group, who are required by state to be assimilated with the mainstream. But, what happens when they do not want to assimilate? How does the state want to control its “other” in the name of state security? How is “otherness” imposed on the people through the process of making them invisible in all spheres of lives? By focusing on Adivasi people’s experiences in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, I will try to address these questions in rest of the chapter.

Knowing the “Other”

Bengali self-identification is so preponderant in Bangladesh that other self-identifications have no spaces in the national rhetoric. The State considers Bangladesh as a land of Bengali people, where minority ethnic and religious groups are “other.” According to Mohsin, there are thirteen ethnic groups in CHT, Bangladesh, who identify themselves as Adivasi or indigenous people.⁵ They are: Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Riang, Murang, Lushai, Bunjogeas (Bawm), Pankhos, Kukis, Chak, Khumi, Mro and Kheyang. Most of the Adivasi people in Bangladesh live in CHT, which

³ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenships and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). 1.

⁴ Amena Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*, Second ed. (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2002). 2.

⁵ Ibid., 12.

occupies a physical area of 5.093 sq. miles, constituting ten percent of the total land area of Bangladesh. The region comprises three districts: Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban. According to the 1991 Census, the total population is 974,465 out of which 501,145 (51 per cent) belong to groups of different ethnic origins and 49 per cent are Bengalis.⁶ It is to be noted that about 70,000 refugees who were in the Indian state of Tripura from 1986 to 1988 are not included in the Census report.

Since 1980, when M.N. Larma, the legendary Adivasi political leader, formed a local political party named Parbatta Chattagram Jana Sanghati Porishad (PCJSS) and demanded a separate nationhood for diverse hill people, educated middle class Adivasi people has started to refer themselves as “Jumma” nation.⁷ The word Jumma has its origins in Jhum, which has been the traditional mode of cultivation of the Adivasi people in CHT. PCJSS invoked this particular nomenclature to infuse Adivasi people with a sense of pride in their past, their traditional system and value.⁸ Despite the term “Jhum’s” links with the past and indigenous ways of life, it has failed to create a universal appeal to one and all Adivasi people, because of its biasness to the dominant ethnic group Chakma. Ever since the celebration of World Indigenous year in 1993, the term indigenous or Adivasi has gained in prominence among Adivasi people in Bangladesh.

The potentiality of this term for establishing indigenous people’s rights globally, create an appeal to Adivasi people in Bangladesh. Therefore, Adivasi people in CHT consider this identity as their political identity that differentiates them from Bengali

⁶ Meghna Guhathakurta, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord and After: Gendered Dimensions of Peace," (UNRISD, 2004), 5.

⁷ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 189.

⁸ Ibid., 191.

people. This identity is their weapon for resisting discriminations caused by state and establishing justice.

However, the Bangladeshi state that was established on the ideology of single national identity has rejected Adivasi people's claim for indigenous status from the very beginning. Prime Minister of Bangladesh and BNP chairperson, Begum Khaleda Zia hindered Adivasi people from claiming a priori rights to their land, by refusing to sign the 1994 UN Charter of Indigenous Peoples, and claiming "there are no aboriginal peoples in Bangladesh and Bengalis are indigenous to Bangladesh."⁹ Though there are always disagreements on policy decision between two major parties –Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh National Party (BNP) –they came to the same platform surrounding on the issue of Adivasi people. Therefore, AL Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni has appeared to reflect the earlier BNP minister's statement, when she says, "Bangladesh does not have any indigenous population. Bangladesh rather has several ethnic minorities and tribal population."¹⁰

According to the Bangladeshi nation-state these minority ethnic groups are "Upojati" or sub-nation and therefore, in 2010, the CHT Affairs Ministry, headed by a Jumma minister, issues a memo ordering that Jumma not be referred to as "Adivasi" or "indigenous," in any government documents.¹¹ But, they are not "Upojati" or sub-nation that government is claiming. They identify themselves as the indigenous people of

⁹ Lamia Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," *Contemporary South Asia* 7, no. 3 (1998): 308.

¹⁰ Naeem Mohaiemen, "Connecting Visible Dots (1997-2010)," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 33.

¹¹ Ibid.

Bangladesh. We can consider the major criteria of indigenous people, which are determined by the United Nations, to figure out whether they are indigenous people of Bangladesh. However, to do this we have to remember that the criteria that UN-body has chosen, are not absolute. Considering the diversity of indigenous peoples, UN-system body has not adopted an official definition of “indigenous” yet. Instead the UN-body has developed a modern understanding of this term based on the following:¹²

1. Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
2. Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.
3. Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
4. Distinct social, economic or political systems.
5. Distinct language, culture and beliefs form non-dominant groups of society.
6. Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

There are some ambiguities in these criteria, which give rise to complexities in the identification of indigenous group. The fourth, fifth and sixth characteristics of “indigenous” identity emphasize on essential and “true” nature of culture, beliefs and economic-political systems. However, in an era of globalization, in the context of neo-liberal governing system, patterns of life in any societies and groups are now increasingly shaped by the connections between societies, which are situated in local and global

¹² “Who are Indigenous People,” *UN Organization*, accessed on May 15, 2012, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

level.¹³ Therefore, there is no ethnic group who has completely distinct language, culture, and socio-economic, political systems. Moreover, when state power, which is so pervasive, tries to submerge minority ethnic people's identity and infuse them in mainstream systems, then it is very difficult to identify the "authentic," "distinctive" characteristic of any given group. But, focusing on the other three criteria – self-identification, historical continuity and especial relationships with the environment – can be a possible way to analyze CHT Adivasi people's indigenous status.

The Adivasi people from different ethnic groups in CHT, identify themselves as indigenous people of Bangladesh. They are the inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tracts since pre-colonial era, when Bengali people were not there. They have especial relationships with their land and nature through Jhum cultivation, which has been the traditional slash and burn cultivation of the Adivasi people in CHT. The government of Bangladesh banned this Jhum cultivation in the name of environment protection. But, Jhum is more than a mode of cultivation, it is a way of life of adivasi people and it is integral to their religious, social and cultural ethos and it denoted their special relationships with their nature and land.¹⁴ So, Adivasi people in CHT meet the criteria of self-identification, historical continuity and especial relationships with their land, which are necessary to claim indigenous status according to UN-body.

These people also mostly, not totally, have satisfied the other characteristic of indigenous status that emphasize "distinctive" ways of life. The Adivasi ethnic groups in

¹³ Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins, "System of Power and Inequality," in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010), 81.

¹⁴ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 191.

CHT differed from each other in terms of language, customs, religious believes, and socio-political organization. Each Adivasi group living in CHT speaks its own dialect and language, which are not Bengali though for the forced cultural “assimilations” we can see the presence of several Bengali words in Adivasi languages. Islam shows that the mother tongue of the Chakmas is a perverted form of the Bengali language written in Burmese characters; the Marmas speak Arakanese, a dialect of Burmese; the Tipras, a language of their own akin to Kachari; the rest of the tribes speak different Assami Burmese tongues of their own.¹⁵ The religion of the most of the ethnic communities of CHT is Buddhism. The members of other ethnic communities are Hindu and animistic in religion though all Hindu are not Adivasi, as most of the Hindu in Bangladesh are Bengali. So, their socio-cultural characteristics are not completely distinctive from dominant socio-cultural pattern. But, considering the major different socio-cultural values and practices of Adivasi people, we can say that they belong to indigenous community.

Despite their valid claim for the recognition as indigenous status, the Bangladeshi government have not only denied Adivasi people’s indigenous status, but also denied to give them their rights as citizens. The political leaders of Bangladesh chose Bengali people, Bengali language, Bengali culture and Islam as the main ingredients for building a homogenous nationhood, with which Adivasi people have no connections. There by, the Bangladeshi state produces the Adivasi as a subject of willed ignorance in the national imagination, and the production of that ignorance enables the state to control the

¹⁵ Sayed Nazmul Islam, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh: Integrational Crisis Between Center and Periphery," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 12 (1981): 1215.

Adivasi populations.¹⁶ By making them invisible in every single sphere of socio-cultural, political, economical life in Bangladesh, the state and its organizations establish Adivasi people as the “other” of Bengali nation.

The process of making them “other” is a continuation of the colonial legacy. It started during the British colonial period, when Europeans rulers and scholars invented a derogative identity for Adivasi people. According to Tripura “Europeans saw themselves as the pinnacle of the evolution and progress; the societies that they colonized were below and behind them in various stages of cultural evolution, the “tribal” societies being at the very bottom.”¹⁷ Therefore, they consider indigenous people as “primitives,” “savages,” and “wild hill tribes.”¹⁸ The post-colonial state follows the legacy of colonialism by continuing colonialist classificatory schemes. Therefore, like their colonial rulers Bangladeshi state and majority of Bengali people consider Adivasi people as “Pahari,” (Wild Hill People) “Upojati” (Sub-nation), and “backward” people.

However, Adivasi people cannot be the members of “tribal” society. Because, a tribal society is generally understood to be one in which social, political and economical relations are organized around Kinship.¹⁹ Obviously, being the members of neo-liberal nation-state, the subjects of global and state power systems, and laborers of capitalist

¹⁶ Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," 303.

¹⁷ Prashanta Tripura, "The Colonial Foundation of Pahari Ethnicity," *The Journal of Social Studies* 58(2004): 4.

¹⁸ Willem van Schendel, "Who Speaks for the Natio? Nationalist Rhetoric and the Challenge of Cultural Pluralism in Bangladesh," in *Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Willem van Schendel and Erik-Jan Zürcher (London and New York: I. B Tauris, 2001).

¹⁹ M. Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968).

production system, Adivasi people are not a “tribe.” Theoretically, they are the citizens of Bangladesh. But, in reality they are not. Because, they do not fulfill the status of citizenship, “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community,”²⁰ which includes civil, political and social rights and obligations.

In Bangladeshi state they are less than citizen. They only exist in the imagination of dominant Bengali group as their “other.” Adivasi children are born as the ‘other,’ before they understand the significance of being the “other.” Being the “other” they feel different, feel distinct from mainstream people. Being the ‘other’ they remain outside the circle, outside the main scenario. They live on the edges, on the margins, on the periphery. They encounter the sense of isolation, apartness, disconnectedness and alienation. The next section will explore how historically rulers have ensured Adivasi people’s status as “other” through militarization.

“Othering” through Militarization

Leaders of the nation-state invent the state’s “others” by homogenizing different ethnic communities under the rubric of dominant group. This homogenization establishes hegemony on minority communities, who are expected to assimilate themselves with the mainstream. But, when minority people resist against state, then state establishes them as its “other,” as a threat to state’s security. On the one hand, the state considers this “other” as “outsider,” who is invisible from every sphere of national life. On the other hand, they are very visible as a threat to state security in the imagination of national leaders. To make them more invisible and vulnerable in the name of nation-state’s security, the state controls its “other” through its military and other “law” enforcement

²⁰ T.H. Marshall, *Sociology at the Crossroads* (London: Heinemann, 1963). 14.

organizations. However, like identity formation of Adivasi people, the technique and ideology for controlling people by military, is the continuation of the legacy of colonialism. In this section, I will explore how like their colonial ancestors, Pakistani and Bengali rulers have created control over Adivasi people's lives through militarization.

Up to 1713, Adivasi people of Chittagong Hill Tracts were independent, and ruled by different chiefs from different communities.²¹ After that period chiefs surrender to Mughal rulers by agreeing to pay tax. According to Mohsin, CHT was ceded to the British East India Company in 1760.²² She claimed "The British policy in the CHT was guided by two main objectives: a) protection of the political, economic and military interest of the British; b) keeping the hill people segregated from the Bengalis."²³ However, the policy of segregation from Bengali people did not serve Adivasi people's political interest. Rather, by keeping Adivasi people distanced from the turbulence of the Indian nationalist movement, British rulers secured their own political interests. Adivasi people didn't accept colonial rules and regulations without resistances. Led by Rono Khan, the deputy of the chief, they declared war against the Company for increasing the revenues. The war came to an end in 1787 through the surrender of Chakma chief Jan Bakhsh Khan, after British had imposed an economic blockade on the Adivasi people in CHT.²⁴ Mohsin shows that after the chief's surrender, gradually the CHT was militarized by the British, who set military camps in the interior of the hills to maintain "law and

²¹ Amena Mohsin, "State Hegemony," in *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, ed. Philip Gain (Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2000), 60.

²² Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 26.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 28.

order” and used political and military means to force the loyalties of the Adivasi people.²⁵

In 1947, the British gave part of the CHT to Pakistan.²⁶ Therefore, Adivasi people in CHT, who were mostly Buddhists, Hindus and animists, suddenly found themselves as “other” in a state that was projected on an Islamic identity. The partition divided the ethnic communities of the CHT among the three newly independent states of India, Pakistan and Myanmar and the consequence of this division was that once populous ethnic communities became minority groups overnight.²⁷ Adivasi people resisted against the incorporation of the CHT into Pakistan. Therefore, from the beginning of the construction of Pakistani nation-state, Adivasi people were recognized as “traitors.” They are branded as “pro-Indian,” as Chakma Chief raised Indian flag on August 15, 1947 though general people remained oblivious to this incident.²⁸ The new Pakistani government became suspicious about Adivasi people’s allegiances and made some major changes that changed Adivasi people’s lives forever. Karim explores the key changes that was made by Pakistani government,

In 1962, the Kaptai Dam was constructed in the Hill area, flooding over 54,000 acres of arable land and displacing nearly 100,000 Chakmas. The Pakistani government abolished the indigenous police force, which had jurisdiction over the Hill areas after the 1900 Regulations, and brought the area under the direct administration of the East Pakistan police force. In 1964, the government finally succeeded in abrogating the excluded territory' status of CHT, and threw the area open to Bengali settlers and to its so-called modernization efforts.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., 144.

²⁶ Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," 305.

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁸ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 37.

²⁹ Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," 305.

Moreover, like their colonial rulers, Pakistani ruling elite also relied heavily on the military to impose its dominance over Adivasi people who appeared to pose a threat to their hegemonic construction.³⁰

After the liberation war in 1971, CHT belonged to Bangladesh that became an independent country, but the fate of Adivasi people worsened. The Bangladeshi state has followed the same military policy of Pakistan and utilized state's militia for imposing the dominance of Bengali's upon the Adivasi people of CHT. According to Mohsin, militarization was triggered by three factors.³¹ Firstly, Adivasi people's neutral position during the war of 1971, have established them once again as "razakar," or "traitors" in a new nation state. Secondly, during the Pakistan regime CHT had served as a training base for the Mizos, who supported Pakistani forces during liberation war. Thirdly, when the Bangladeshi constitution declared Bengali to be the basis of nationhood in the new state, Adivasi people sought for their political and cultural autonomy. Moreover, Manobendra Narayan Larma, the legendary Adivasi leader, established a political group named Parbattay Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) on March 7, 1972. The party added a military wing to fight against Bengali freedom fighters, who started to kill innocent Adivasi people after the independence of Bangladesh. Considering all of these factors, including the military move of PCJSS, as a threat to state's sovereignty, Bangladeshi government embarked upon the militarization of CHT in the name of "national security."

The military is spread out all over the CHT. The Bangladesh government has deployed one third of its total army in the CHT, where there are over 230 army camps,

³⁰ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 149.

³¹ Ibid., 164.

more than 100 BDR camps and over 80 police camps in the area.³² Apart from being physically present and controlling CHT's administration, the military is also posing a constant threat to Adivasi people's economic, cultural, political and religious freedom by conducting massacre, violating human rights, and intimidating Adivasi people's existence. Military has become a weapon of state to submerge Adivasi people's voice and experiences. However, military is not the only one means through which government makes Adivasi people invisible from all sphere of life. In the next section, I will explore those spheres, in which Adivasi people remain as "invisible other."

Invisible "Other"

The Adivasi people of Bangladesh are ubiquitously absent as subjects, as actors, as agents in the national imagination; they are invisible in the administrative, educational, economical systems, and in the popular media. The state sponsored education system produces students who are ignorant of ethnic and religious diversity within Bangladesh, as primary and secondary textbooks do not explore Adivasi people's diverse history and cultures from their points of view; rather project them as "primitive," "backward," "sub-nation" groups. The state-controlled television occasionally features programs on the cultural life –especially songs and dances –of Adivasi people that do not inform viewers about the history, political organization, and customs of Adivasi communities.³³ These silences make them invisible in the mainstream national lives.

The "othering" of the Adivasi people also takes place through hegemonic historical narratives of Bangladesh. The history of Bangladesh as conceived by Bengali is

³² Ibid., 172.

³³ Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," 308.

a history of glorious Bengali leaders and freedom fighters. There is no place for Adivasi people in this history, except as “villain.” In 1971, several of the key members of the Chakma community joined forces with the Pakistani Army during the Bangladeshi freedom struggle. As a result of this, not only Chakma, but also other ethnic groups of Adivasi people have become “unpatriotic” and “traitors.” While it is true that some Chakma leaders did support the Pakistani rulers in 1971, it is equally true that many Adivasi people took active part in liberation war of Bangladesh by fighting alongside Bengalis and offering protection to the Bengalis fleeing the Pakistani military.³⁴ Despite their active participation in the process of nation-state building, Bengali nationalism tries to hide that Adivasi people too have been an integral part of Bangladesh.

They are alienated not only from dominant national narratives, but also from mainstream economic, political systems, and state’s constitution. Bangladeshi state banned their traditional mode of cultivation system “Jhum” and transformed their common property into private property. The government denied approval to the legal status of two large political parties –United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) and Parbattay Chattagram Jana Sanghati Parishad (PCJSS) –that represent CHT Adivasi people. The constitution of Bangladesh has remained silent about the existence of ethnic minorities with distinctive identities, which is also an indication of the marginal status of the Adivasi people in Bangladesh.³⁵ Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh’s first Prime Minister, in 1975, addressed the Adivasi people as brethren and told them to become Bengalis and

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ainoon Naher and Prashanta Tripura, "Violence Against Indigenous Women," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 194.

join the mainstream of Bengali culture.³⁶ The constitution of Bangladesh in 1972 followed Rahman's ideology of nationalism, as it claimed, "By nationalism all citizens of Bangladesh are Bengali."³⁷ The new constitution claims that all citizens of Bangladesh are Bangladeshi, but the constitution always considers Bangladeshi as the synonym of Muslim Bengali. This alarming absence of the Adivasi people in the socio-cultural, economic, and political map of Bangladesh explains why they have become "invisible other" in the mind of dominant Bengali group that has little interest in the Adivasi communities.

In spite of their invisibility in the mainstream scenario of Bangladesh, their marginality, their experiences are not an entirely untold story. Rather, the discrimination, deprivation and exploitation in the CHT have attracted attention of national and international scholars and audiences.³⁸ But, in the context of historical marginalization of Adivasi communities, Adivasi women's distinctive experiences remain submerged. Both as women and as members of marginalized communities Adivasi women face different forms of discrimination, inequality and injustice and they have unique strategies for resisting against power structures. On the one hand, they are sexually, economically, politically discriminated by dominant ethnic group Bengali and their militia. On the other hand, by living with patriarchy, Adivasi women face gender-based discrimination and violence in all spheres of lives within their household and their communities. They are

³⁶ Willem van Schendel, Wolfgang Mey, and Aditya Kumar Dewan, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Living in a Borderland* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000). 9.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Meghna Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," in *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, ed. Philip Gain (Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2000), 79.

involved in all aspect of production, but men have a monopoly on inheritance.³⁹ Very often Adivasi women raise their children in the absence of their husbands, but they have no parental rights over their children. They take all responsibility of housework and also often earn the major part of their household expenditures, but they encounter sexual violence within their family. They are more involved in religious ritual, but as monks and general women they have to follow the advice of their male peers and they are denied entry to monasteries because it is believed by Adivasi Buddhist men that women bring impurity to work and prayer.⁴⁰ They participate actively in the social-movement against all discrimination caused by state, but they are not the ones who takes decision in social matters as well as in household.⁴¹ Therefore, their relegated position within their own communities as well as Bangladeshi state establish them as a distinctive “other.”

Their suffering within their own communities as well as household remain invisible and unheard, as Adivasi women often become reluctant to speak about the discriminations to protect their community and family “honor.” Their perceptions and experiences of ethnic, class, and gender discrimination in Bangladesh have shaped the nature of their silence. Mainstream Bengali communities pose several stereotypical ideas about Adivasi communities, which includes that Adivasi people are responsible for their own suffering. This cultural prejudice of mainstream Bengali society fosters Adivasi women’s fear of ramifications on their families and communities and thereby motivates women to remain silent about their marginal positions in their own communities.

³⁹ Illira Dewan, "Women in Hill Society," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chattagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 190.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 191.

⁴¹ Philip Gain, "Women in the CHT: Some Facts," in *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, ed. Philip Gain (Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2010), 94.

The interconnected nature of Adivasi women's marginality remain mostly invisible in academic arena, as to address the issues of Adivasi people in CHT, mainstream scholars and writers have ignored Adivasi women's relegation by equating women's distinctive problems with communities' marginalization. Even when these researches consider Adivasi women's marginalization, instead of focusing on diverse socio-political sphere of lives, they just look at women's sexual vulnerabilities. Moreover, mainstream researchers and journalists try to analyze Adivasi people's marginalization from patriarchal point of view by focusing on indigenous males' experiences and ignoring women's voices.

Therefore, the multifaceted experiences of Adivasi women have remained all most unheard, their unique marginalization, agency, strategy have remained mostly unseen. In this way, Adivasi women remain more invisible than Adivasi men. They exist as the "other" of "other," and margin of margin. In the next few chapters, I will explore how state leaders, activists, scholars and journalists have alienated Adivasi women from those issues – peace Accord, land rights, violence against Adivasi people and politics of nationalism –that are considered as main issues for talking about Adivasi people. My aim is to see how patriarchy as well as state has shaped Adivasi women's experiences of economical, political and sexual marginalization and possibility of activism, which is rarely addressed by scholars.

CHAPTER THREE

PEACE IS NOT FOR WOMEN: A STORY OF GENDERED PEACE ACCORD

History shows us that the peace accords and treaties have been signed between dominant and minority racial, ethnic groups or between powerful and politically-economically weak nation-states to end conflicts. In most of the cases, minority groups have been betrayed and peace has lost its meaning in their lives. In this way, peace has only existed in the paper of treaties. However, scholars and politicians have debated with each other on the issue that whether peace treaty of a particular geo-political region is implemented properly or not. But, scholars often have paid little attention that how some groups of people have become invisible in the journey towards peace. This chapter will explore how Adivasi women are alienated from the peace building process and the peace accord that was signed by AL government and one branch of PCJSS in 1997.

Known Part of the Peace Accord

Scholars and journalists, who have researched on the CHT Peace Accord, mostly have focused on the issues of what was this Accord and how the government has failed to implement the Accord. According to them, the governments of Bangladesh always has tried to solve CHT problems by using law enforcement institutions. In 1997, when various international organizations, human rights groups and donor agencies created pressure on government to reinvigorate the peace process in the CHT, AL government took initiative for establishing peace in the CHT. As a result they started peace talking with the local Adivasi party PCJSS. Finally in 1997 government and PCJSS signed the

Peace Accord.¹ After that PCJSS army laid down their arms and the party demobilized its military. However, the Accord was not supported by all sections of Adivasi society. Groups within the PCJSS, including its influential student wing, which subsequently helped form the UPDF on December 26, 1998, raised a strong voice of opposition against the Accord by claiming self-determination for the indigenous people of the CHT, and arguing that the 1997 Accord failed to address the fundamental demands of the Jumma people.²

According to Pandey and Jalil,³ and Rashiduzzaman⁴ The major objectives of the 1997 peace Accord included protection of the land rights of the indigenous people, revival of their cultural uniqueness, rehabilitation of internally displaced people and refugees who had left the country, withdrawal of the military from the CHT (with the exception of permanent military establishments), and self-government through regional and district councils. Unfortunately, the undemocratic, fundamentalist and discriminatory attitudes of nation's major political parties and bureaucrats, and the presences of military in the CHT, have worked as obstacles against the implementation of the Accord.⁵

Therefore, though more than thirteen years have passed after signing of the Accord, the main issues of the Accord, have been left unimplemented. Firstly, their

¹ Panday and Jamil, "Conflicts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An Unimplemented Accord and Continued Violence," 1062.

² Ibid., 1063.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord: Institute Features and Strategic Concerns."

⁵ Mangal Chakma, "Status of Implementation," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 48.

demand for recognition as the Jumma nation has been denied, instead CHT is recognized as a “Tribal” inhabited area and term “Upojati,” that means sub-nation, is being used to identify Adivasi people, while Bengalis are considered as “full nation.”⁶ In this way, the state reaffirmed the dominance and hegemony of Bengali “nation” within the states of Bangladesh. Secondly, though the Regional Council Act and the three Hill District Council Acts were enacted, they were never properly enforced, so the special administrative system could never be made effective.⁷ Thirdly, in a symbolic gesture towards fulfilling the 1997 Accord, the AL government removed thirty-five temporary Army Camps from the region, which represents only 10% of total camps in the region.⁸ Fourthly, though the Land Commission was formed, it was unable to resolve any land disputes. The Jumma refugees who returned from India and the internally displaced Jumma people were not rehabilitated, but rather, Bengali settlers were counted as internally displaced people and efforts were made to rehabilitate them in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in violation of the peace Accord.

Therefore, scholars have pointed out correctly that basically this Accord is a hegemonic treaty, which secures the interests of dominant Bengali group, while violates Adivasi people’s rights. As the basis for sustainable peace in CHT, the Accord lacks the principle of justice, human rights and democracy, which are necessary to create a nonhegemonic society. In spite of scholars’ thorough analysis of power imbalance within the Accord, most of them have failed to see how Adivasi women are absent in this Peace

⁶ Amana Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003). 45, 130.

⁷ Chakma, "Status of Implementation," 48.

⁸ Mohaiemen, "Connecting Visible Dots (1997-2010)," 33.

building process. Researchers have investigated the inherent flaws in the CHT Accord and explored the failure of Peace Accord, violations of human rights in post-accord eras and the problems and barriers for the implementation of the peace Accord. However, they have failed to investigate how Adivasi women's problems are absent from the peace Accord. The next section will explore how the government and PCJSS both have alienated Adivasi women from the peace building process and why women's contributions in the peace process are significant.

Peace is not for Adivasi Women

Though it is true that there is male dominated culture in the practices of soldiering and military conscription, it does not mean that men essentially associate with war, while women associate with peace. Feminist theorists however have ferociously challenged the essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity that establish men and women as each other's opposite party. It has been noticed in different conflicts that women are not only victims of war but also active participants. de Silva claimed in a press conference that in Sri Lanka, some male fighters perceived women Tamil paramilitaries to be more violent than their male colleagues.⁹ Therefore, clearly woman is not a potential agent for building peace only for her biology.

However, as human being, like their male partner, women are equally responsible for establishing peace. But, the CHT peace Accord completely ignored Adivasi women's roles in peace building process, which make this Accord as a gendered agreement.¹⁰ We can examine the gendered nature of the peace Accord by focusing on how Adivasi

⁹ Guhathakurta, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord and After: Gendered Dimensions of Peace," 4.

¹⁰ Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*: 53.

women are excluded from three steps of peace building process:

1. Adivasi women were absent in the negotiation process through which the government and PCJSS had come to an agreement and signed the Accord.
2. The language of peace Accord does not reflect Adivasi women's rights.
3. The Accord does not mention Adivasi women's involvement in effecting peace building process in post accord period.

Women, especially from marginal communities, have distinctive understanding for peace building process. According to Enloe, women have a unique angle in peace not due to women being nurturing; rather, it seems more to do with knowing oppression from their own lived experiences.¹¹ Women have special experiences of alienation, discrimination and marginalization that give them special insights for understanding the structure of unequal relationships, the relationships that create the context for conflicting situation. Women are more likely to see a continuum of violence that intersects gender, race, class, ethnicity and stretches from the home to street to the battlefield. Therefore, the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security, passed on October 31, 2000, that urges member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institution for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.¹² In spite of women's unique insights for establishing peace, and the UN's demand for women's participation in conflict resolution process, not a single Adivasi woman was present in the peace talk. It does not mean that Adivasi women were not active in their socio-political movement in

¹¹ Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics After the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993).

¹² Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*: 108.

that particular historical moment. Rather, they were very active in insurgency period, which started from late 70s and ended in 1997. They learned how to use arms and fight against the Bengali army, they acted as Adivasi soldiers informers. They established the women's wing of PCJSS and organized local women against state laded discrimination before the peace-Accord was signed. The Organizing Secretary of HWF Kalpana Chakma, a great example of an Adivasi women leader, was abducted from the Hills on the eve of 1996 general elections allegedly by an army officer. But, when the government and PCJSS signed the Accord, both of these groups just ignored Adivasi women's roles for making that very day possible.

Apart from this, the Accord only strengthens the masculine values of politics and secures male members' interests. By ignoring Adivasi women's distinctive problems, the Accord has failed to secure Adivasi women's rights. According to Mohsin¹³, in the formal peace Accord, the membership of the Regional Council did provide for reserved seats for women members. Among the 25 seats, 12 were male ("tribal") and two female ("tribal") and among the non-Adivasi six were male and one female. This reflects gender imbalance and male hegemonism and disregards Adivasi women's sacrifices and participation in the peace-building activities. Moreover, the Accord makes no provisions for the rights of women. A specific case is Adivasi women's right to land. The PCJSS has remained silent on this issue, despite waging a struggle that had land as its core agenda. Moreover, this Accord has made no provision for the rehabilitation of the rape victims or domestic violence victims. Indeed, the woman question remains subsumed under the national question, not only by the state, but also by the local Adivasi male leaders.

¹³ Ibid., 54.

Therefore, we see Shantu Larma, the leader of the PCJSS to say, “I do not believe in women empowerment, once the nation is empowered women would automatically be empowered.”

Because of the male-centered interests and values in the politics of nationalism, women are not only ignored in the language of the Accord, but also from the post-accord involvement in managing peace process. Despite the fact that Adivasi women had not only been the worst sufferers and victims of the state violence, but they had also been an integral part of the autonomy movement, there was no mention about Adivasi women’s possible responsibility in the peace building process in future. It is evident that in post-accord era women have suffered severe violence.¹⁴ But, most importantly, it is Adivasi women’s organization –Hill Women’s Federation –that has brought the violence issue into the public forum through networking with the Bengali women organizations. They have carried on their movement both within and outside the Hill Tracts. Their workers dared not go home for years for fear of being arrested.¹⁵ They are fighting for the rights of Adivasi women and also taking necessary steps for establishing solidarity within broader socio-political contexts, which is necessary for securing peace in the CHT. Unfortunately, both the government and the Adivasi leaders have failed to recognize the power of these women for protecting peace in post-accord era.

Considering the facts that there was no Adivasi woman who participated in the peace talks, woman questions are missing from the Accord and there is a total absence of

¹⁴ Sadeka Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 185.

¹⁵ Guhathakurta, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord and After: Gendered Dimensions of Peace," 13.

women from the entire peace process, we can claim that this was a gendered agreement.

The gender question has remained unresolved both within the purview of hill politics as well as between hill organizations and Bengali civil society groups. Politicians blame each other for the failure of the implementation of this Accord. Researchers have found out the inherent flaws within the Accord. But, very few one have identified that peace cannot be established without engaging the one half of the population in the CHT.

Scholars' male-gaze often fails to see that peace Accord will remain as a fairy tale if peace cannot be assured for women too.

CHAPTER FOUR

REFUGEE IN OWN LAND

According to UN reports there are more than 370 million indigenous people spread across 70 countries worldwide. UN claims “they are the descendants - according to a common definition - of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.”¹ Therefore, in spite of the fact that the indigenous people are the original inhabitants of several geographical areas, history has become the witness of the alienation of indigenous group from their land by dominant groups. Native American Indian, Australian Aborigines, First nation people of Canada, Adivasi people of India and millions of other indigenous people have gone through this process. Land grabbing by dominant groups has devastating effects on indigenous communities. In this chapter, I will explore how the government has grabbed land from indigenous people and how the eviction process affects Adivasi women.

Eviction of Adivasi People from Their Land

Bangladeshi government has always been interested in Adivasi people’s land rather than focusing on their wellbeing. This becomes evident in the announcement of Area Commander Maj. Gen. Manzur, who said, “We don’t want you. You can go off

¹ “Who are Indigenous People,” *UN Organization*, accessed on May 15, 2012, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

Whenever you please. We just want your land.”² Therefore, the major conflicts during the internal war (1973-1997) between Bengalis and Adivasi Hill people were largely oriented around competition for control over and access to lands and other natural resources.³ In the postaccord era, the conflict for land continues for the failure of implementation of the Accord. Moreover, Bangladesh state has continuously rejected the demand of indigenous status of Adivasi people since according to international law that means conceding them certain land rights.⁴ Instead of establishing Adivasi people’s lands rights, the government denies them in three ways.

Firstly, like colonial rulers the Bangladeshi government alienated them from their land by ascribing private property rights upon them and abolishing their traditional cultivation system Jhum. In pre-colonial times, the Adivasi people in the CHT practiced slash-and-burn cultivation, which is locally known as Jhum. They did not have title deeds for their Jhum land or even for their homesteads, as lands were shared by whole community.⁵ But, to increase revenue and control Adivasi people’s migration from land to land, which were required for Jhum cultivation, British rulers prohibited this traditional cultivation and introduced private property laws.⁶ They offered private land rights only to those Adivasi people who agreed to adopting plough cultivation. Under the post-colonial states of Pakistan and Bangladesh private rights of freehold and leasehold were given to

² Sagheer Faiz and Naeem Mohaiemen, "Peace in Our Time? (1715-1997)," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 27.

³ Roy, "Resisting Onslaught on Forest Commons in Post-Accord CHT," 125.

⁴ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances."

⁵ Gain, "Researved Forests Complicate Land Issues," 122.

⁶ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*.

those Adivasi and Bengalis operating timber, rubber and horticultural plantations.⁷ The Jhum cultivators were supposed to be “rehabilitated” and given settlement with title deeds, but that did not happen with most of the Adivasi people, who practically became landless.

Secondly, the government has grabbed their land by establishing reserved forest in the land of Adivasi people for commercial establishment. There are growing numbers of timber and rubber industries in the CHT driven by profit-oriented capitalist production. Roy claimed that in the post-accord era, competition over natural resources also started to involve a growing number of “stakeholders” – external investors, multilateral development banks, bilateral development or “donor” agencies of OECD governments, and development-related institutions with local, national or international ties –who have come out as open actors after the signing of the Accord and who have become interested in Adivasi people’s lands in the name of “development.”⁸ Therefore, Adivasi people not only become landless, but also they have to deal with the complex interplay of economic and “development” forces.

Thirdly, the government has evicted Adivasi people from their ancestors’ land by settling landless Bengalis in the CHT. Government legitimized Bengalis’ migration to CHT by arguing that CHT is a vast region, the size being one tenth of Bangladesh. Therefore, general Bengalis people also started to believe that million Bengalis could be settled down here. However, according to 1956 census the population of Hill Tracts was half million, and amount of cultivable land for per family was 3 ½ to 4 acres, which were

⁷Shapan Adnan and Ranajit Dastidar, *Alienation of the Lands of Indigenous Peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (Dhaka: CHTC, IWGIA, 2011). 40.

⁸ Roy, "Resisting Onslaught on Forest Commons in Post-Accord CHT," 125.

not sufficient for the survival of those families even in that particular period.⁹ Moreover, a scientific research in CHT in 1960 showed that only 3.2% land was suitable for all purpose of agriculture, 15% of land was suitable for fruit gardens and 77% of land was solely suitable for afforestation.¹⁰ Despite the scarcity of useable land in the CHT, government settled around half a million Bengalis people there by its military and civil administration through three phases during 1979-84.¹¹ Bengalis' migration to the CHT has destroyed the socio-cultural, economical and political structures of Adivasi people and made them minority in their own land.

Therefore, conversion of Jhum cultivation, introduction of private property laws, commercial plantation activities and massive migration of landless Bengalis have chased Adivasi people out of their traditional homeland and into an uncertain future. Since, the conflicts between Adivasi people and Bengalis happen surrounding on land issues, several researchers have focused on how Adivasi people have been uprooted by dominant group. However, scholars rarely consider the facts that how alienation from land has affected Adivasi women distinctively. In the next section, I will explore how Adivasi women's experienced have shaped by the eviction process.

“The Land is Mine Too”

Several ecofeminists have claimed that women are inherently closer to nature. However, their argument has been denied by several feminists who believe that there is no essential and natural relationships between women and nature. The essentialism in

⁹ Tanvir Mokammel, *Teardrop of Karnaphuli* (Karnaphulir Kanna in Bengali), 20:50, 2005
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gMVb7e1hPnQ

¹⁰ Mohsin, "State Hegemony," 67-68.

¹¹ Ibid.

ecofeminism that heated debate within feminist world in the 1980s pushed several ecofeminists into analyzing the relationships between women and nature differently. Therefore, feminist like Shiva and Mies¹² see these relationships by drawing parallels between the subjugation of women and nature. This notion helps to avoid essentialist, sexist and socially constrained reasoning because it focuses on broader trends, instead of essentializing “female” traits. Moreover, this notion is also helpful to recognize the fact that whenever nature has been exploited brutally, women members of the community also went through severe threat.

The Adivasi women from CHT have also become vulnerable when their nature has been abused by capitalist rulers. They also have distinctive relationships with nature and their lands, which make them rebellious for securing their lands for themselves and for their families. “This is my land, my forest, I will not leave my land” – stated one Adivasi woman in the documentary titled “Teardrops of Karnaphulir”¹³ though these are the exact words that most of the Adivasi women utter for expressing their anxiety about being evicted. Their anxiousness is not baseless. When Adivasi people are alienated by dominated group, then Adivasi women suffered most, as their security, mobility, livelihood, equal participation in the cultivation always structured by their relationships with their lands.

State-sponsored Bengali in-migration and presence of military camps in Adivasi people’s lands not only led to the displacement of the hill people in the CHT but also

¹² Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993).

¹³ Tanvir Mokammel, *Teardrop of Karnaphuli* (Karnaphulir Kanna in Bengali), 20:00, 2005
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gMVb7e1hPnQ

created security problems for them, for both the men and the women. But, for women the problem is different, as the hostile environment affects their daily activities by putting threat on their mobility. There are large numbers of army and other security personnel and Bengalis in the rural areas of the CHT, where indigenous women move about to collect water, fuel and fodder. Adivasi women are sexually and verbally harassed and assaulted by security personnel and Bengali settlers, when they have to go outside their home for their daily activities.¹⁴ Therefore, being insecure in their own land Adivasi women often feel the urgency for decreasing their mobility.

Moreover, Adivasi women suffer from the new emerging context that demands that they engage in the capitalist market system. There are an increasing number of women headed households in the CHT because of the absence of male members who either were killed or forced to flee to India. Women who are left without any male members or the male members, who are capable for bearing the household expenditure, become responsible to search for new means of livelihood both within and outside the CHT. This exposes Adivasi women to new forms of vulnerabilities. On the one hand, they are deprived from getting a proper wage for their labor or good price for their product. For instances, Halim¹⁵ showed that for selling their products, hill women from the remote areas used to visit bazar areas that are dominated by Bengali people. Some of her interviewed women mentioned that in most cases of market transactions they are deprived of the actual price of the farm produce by unscrupulous Bengali traders and

¹⁴ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 185.

¹⁵ Sadeka Halim, "Human Rights and The Indigenous Women: A case Study from CHT," in *State of Human Rights in Bangladesh Women's Perspective* (Dhaka: Women for Women, 2002).

middlemen. On the other hand, they face sexual and physical abuse in their workplace. Sexual violence is a part of Adivasi women's daily lives. But, it not only happens in the CHT. Even when educated Adivasi women migrate to other city for new livelihood, they face same problem. For instance, Naher and Tripura's one of the informants –an Adivasi female graduate –told them that she took up a job at a real estate firm and at the end of the first day of work, her boss told her that she was hired because as a “tribal” woman, she would be expected to be less inhibited in interactions with clients and fully prepared to fulfill “any wishes” of clients.¹⁶

Apart from the, eviction of Adivasi people and presence of Bengali settlers and the Army also have affected Adivasi women's education. In the time of insurgency or in any conflict situation, Adivasi people sell their cattle and lands at dirt-cheap prices and most of the time they would not be able to buy them back again. Therefore, the family income decline and often the price would be the education of the girl-child.¹⁷ Moreover, the number of high schools for girls is lower than the numbers of boys and the government often tries to hide this issue by claiming that there is not sufficient land. However, thousand of acres of Adivasi lands are transformed, as reserved forest in the name of “development,” while women's development has remained overlooked. Adivasi girls who live in remote areas find it difficult to attend school. Because, there is always threat for sexual violence from settler Bengalis and Army, who grabbed their homeland and bound them to live in a rural place from where attending school becomes impossible for girls.

¹⁶ Ainoon Naher and Prashanta Tripura, "Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women in bangladesh," *The Journal of Social Studies* 123(2009): 10.

¹⁷ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 80.

However, Adivasi women not only suffer for the government policy for land grabbing, but also for their traditional patriarchal rules for inheritance. With the exception of the Marma Adivasi ethnic group, women in Adivasi communities do not have equal inheritance rights. Since men inherit the wealth and land of the family, in Adivasi societies men are more valued than women.¹⁸ Without economic freedom they have a minor role in the family. Moreover, widows cannot inherit wealth if they remarry without having a son. Their inheritance status within their own communities along with government's forced eviction policy and settlement of Bengalis in Adivasi lands have pushed them to live in the margin.

In conclusion, it can be said that the government's forced alienation of Adivasi people from their land and state sponsored settlement of Bengalis in Adivasi land have destroyed Adivasi people's ways of life, their socio-cultural, economical and political structure. But, Adivasi women encounter distinctive marginalization as both the state, and their own patriarchal societies deprived them of their land rights. On the one hand, Adivasi women experience the lower status than men within the societies, as they do not have inheritance rights. On the other hand, they encounter state violence. Therefore, Adivasi women have to juggle between their own communities and protecting themselves from the ongoing war.

¹⁸ Ibid., 84.

CHAPTER FIVE

“LIVES ARE NOT OURS”: VIOLENCE AGAINST ADIVASI PEOPLE

Violence toward minority groups is very common in a conflicting situation. The dominant group, who has access to the state's economic and political power, often denies that their acts, and policy constitute organized violence. Powerful elite groups legitimize their violence by characterizing it as necessary measure to ensure order and respect of law. When researchers and scholars analyze state violence against minority groups they often focus on the general scenario of the violence and assume that it affects all minority people equally. However, the effects of violence on women have a distinctive nature. Despite the fact that violence against women is so widespread, it has been always under reported. This chapter will explore Adivasi women's life, struggle and complex situation in the CHT, where they negotiated with vulnerability, and injustice within the context of traditional patriarchal system and militarization.

Mainstream Analysis of Violence

There are very few researches that explore the vicious situation in the CHT. For the fear of the government and its military, researchers rarely talk about this 'sensitive' issue. There are incidents of rape, forced religious conversion and religious persecution, forced eviction, arrests, torture and kidnapping, and massacre in the CHT. Researchers and scholars, who focus on how military has committed gross violations of human rights in the region, mainly explore the incidents of massacre though only few of them mention about sexual violence against women. They have showed that since 1980 there have been

more than dozen instances of massacre of the Adivasi people by the Bengali settlers and security personnel. In 1980 on March 25, a local Martial Law Commander opened fire on the gathering of Adivasi people at a Buddhist temple in Kaukhali-Kalamati, created a death toll of almost 300.¹ In Barkal massacre on May 5, 1984 a total of 110 Adivasi people were killed and many women were raped and later shot dead. In Panchari, Matiranga and Comillatilla-Taindong massacres hundreds of Adivasi people were killed in 1986. On August 1988 in Hirachar, Sarbotail, Khagrachari, and Pablakhali, Adivasi people were killed and women were gang raped. In Longudu massacre, that happened on May 4, 1989 people were killed, house were burnt and Buddhist temples were destroyed. In 1992 in Malya and Logang massacre hundreds of Adivasi people were killed and thousands of house were burnt. In Naniarchar, on November 11, 1993 and in Bandarban, on March 14, 1995 settlers and armies set fire on the houses of Adivasi people and killed hundreds people. In 2006 Mahalchari massacre settlers and armies attacked 10 Adivasi villages simultaneously. In the recent sporadic clashes between Bengalis and Adivasi people over two thousands of indigenous peoples have been made homeless, two Buddhist temples and one church have been burnt to ashes.²

When researchers have analyzed these incidences of massacres, they rarely have considered women's distinctive vulnerability in these violent situations. Several researchers just have touched the issue of sexual violence without explaining its effect on women's lives. Only the incidence of the abduction of Kalpana Chakma, a frontline

¹ Faiz and Mohaiemen, "Peace in Our Time? (1715-1997)," 29.

² Audity Falguni, "Budhdhapudi Chakma," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 57.

female activist in the struggle for establishing Adivashi people's rights, got careful attention from researchers, scholars, journalists, human rights activists, and feminist organizations. As Kalpana was the Organizing Secretary of Hill Women's Federation and a known figure among Bangladeshi activists, her abduction created a storm in whole Adivasi communities as well as in the world of activists, and social workers. But, Kalpana's incident is not a separated case. Rather, there are thousands women in the CHT, who are suffering from sexual violence, forced abduction and there are thousands other who were killed. Adivasi women are facing violence not only from state, but also from their own communities, which remain unseen and unheard. Both the patriarchal state and Adivasi patriarchal societies try to submerge the sufferings of Adivasi women. By ignoring women's experiences of violence researchers also participate in the practice that discriminate Adivasi women's rights.

Unseen Violence to Adivasi Women

Violence does not necessarily arise only from beyond the ethnic boundary. Rather, it exists within societies, and in home. According to Naher and Tripura,

While growing number of indigenous women face discrimination and violence outside their homes in the countryside as well as in urban areas, they do not necessarily find safe havens in their own homes or communities. Instead, there too they may face an increasing trend of gender-based violence.³

Indeed, domestic violence against women in Adivasi communities is not rare. KMKS's case studies, an NGO based in Khagrachari, indicate that Adivasi women in the CHT encounter different forms of violence, ranging from physical abuse by husbands to rapes.⁴ In most cases, the victims are not allowed to go to the court, nor do they have the means,

³ Naher and Tripura, "Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women in bangladesh," 5.

⁴ Ibid., 7.

to seek justice. One of case shows that one 14 year old Chakma girl was raped by four Chakma men in a remote village of Rangamati in 2007 and local Adivasi leaders settled the matter in exchange for BDT 6,000, which rapists had to pay to the victim's family.⁵

Women's suffering within their own communities as well as household remain invisible and unheard, as Adivasi women do not want to speaking about the violence that they encounter in their own home for protecting their communities and family 'honor.' Mainstream Bengali communities pose several stereotypical ideas about Adivasi communities, which includes that Adivasi people are responsible for their own suffering. This cultural prejudice of mainstream Bengali society fosters Adivasi women's fear of ramifications on their families and communities and thereby motivates women to remain silent about their marginal positions in their own communities.

However, Adivasi men's violence against women is not completely separated from broader violence caused by the state and its organizations at least for two reasons. Firstly, domestic violence against Adivasi women is partly the result of the anger and frustration of the Adivasi men who are dispossessed and oppressed by state.⁶ This fact is not only true for violent situation in the CHT, but also appropriate for several other vicious contexts where indigenous women are suffering both for their traditional patriarchal system and the state. Native American women in the United States of America are also suffering for domestic violence that is partly the outcome of state discrimination against Native American societies. Therefore, we can not speak about the domestic violence, traditional patriarchal systems, and indigenous women's marginalization within

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

their own communities without emphasizing the characteristics of state as a hegemonic construct that influence and reinforce the behavior of those who engage in violent action against a perceived 'other.'

Secondly, the state is not merely a patriarchal institution, because in it the laws and customs for society are defined and controlled not only by men, but also by men from dominant groups to discriminate against not only women, but also all marginal people. Therefore, the Bangladeshi state not only influences domestic violence against Adivasi women, but also conducts violence against women from ethnic minority groups. Rather than ensuring Adivasi women's security in conflict situation, state makes Adivasi women fall prey to violence such as rape, murder, kidnapping, religious conversion, and other forms of terrorism. Violence is usually executed by politically motivated settlers, security forces, a section of political and economic leaders, and government employees based in the CHT, who are aided, or at least shielded by the state apparatus that exclude non-Bengalis.⁷

Sexual Violence Against Adivasi Women

In conflict situations women's victimization by dominant group are shaped by the interplay of women's ethnic and gender identities. Their rights are violated in two ways: as a member of dominant group's 'enemy' and as a female member of the 'enemy.' But, why does a woman's body becomes the central point for national politics, especially in ethnic conflict? One of the reasons behind this is the internalization and intensification of masculine ethos, with considering women as symbols of collective purity and honor.⁸ On

⁷ Chakma, "Women Invisible in CHT Accord," 181.

⁸ Naher and Tripura, "Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women in bangladesh," 9.

the one hand, masculine characteristics of nationalism pave the platform for violating women's rights because, "Nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope."⁹ Therefore, the state appears as a gendered institution that allows limited power to women and little attention to women's issues. On the other hand, the resonance of woman's body in the national ideology as a symbol of honor, make women's bodies a contested area upon which both the state and the minority ethnic groups fight against each other. Women's bodies becomes the ground where the ideology of nationalism take material form and represents the success or failure of nation building.¹⁰

This becomes evident in the conflict between Adivasi people and the Bangladeshi state, where rape has been used as an instrument of war against the purity and authenticity of Adivasi identity.¹¹ According to Khisha, rapes of Adivasi women by Bengali security personnel in the early 1970 was one of the main reasons that made birth of Shanti Bahini, the armed wing of the PCJSS, that waged an armed struggle for the regional autonomy, inevitable.¹² But, the armed insurgency of Adivasi soldiers resulted into many more incidents of rapes of Adivasi women by security forces. Therefore, Adivasi women constitute the most vulnerable section of population in the context of militarization in the CHT. Among the many crimes committed against the people of the Hill Tracts, sexual violence such as rape, gang rape, molestation, abduction and sexual

⁹ Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics After the Cold War*: 44.

¹⁰ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications 1997).

¹¹ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*.

¹² Pradipta Khisha, *Parbotyo Chattagramer Shomosya (The Problem of the Chittagong Hill Tracts)* (Dhaka: Sahitya Prokash, 1996).

harassment are prevalent. In 1990, information from one refugee camp in India indicates that 1 in every 10 female has been a victim of rape in the CHT.¹³ As Mohsin notes, according to a report of the CHT Commission, “between 1991 and 1993 over 94 percent of the rape cases of the Hill women were by the security personnel. Over 40 percent of these women were under eighteen years of age.”¹⁴ It has been alleged that between 1998 and 2008, approximately twenty Adivasi women have been raped and in 2009, there were more incidents of rape, sexual harassment and murder of Adivasi women, which included a thirteen year old Adivasi girl’s rape incident by a police officer.¹⁵

Adivasi women not only encounter rape, but also they are face sexual and verbal harassment when they try to protect their male members of the family from state aggression. In a conflict situation, men are more likely to be suspected and picked up than women. Therefore, as Guhathakurta¹⁶ shows, Adivasi women often become reluctant to send their boys or husbands to the market places and decide to go to the market on their own. For going to the market they need a pass from security personnel, who verbally and physically abuse them. Even in the market places women are visibly harassed, often physically, mostly verbally both by security forces and Bengali settlers. Derogatory names which often one community used for another e.g. Chakku, for Chakmas. Moghs for Marmas etc. are used as verbal abuse by security personnel on the streets. Security personnel often searched buses coming in and going out of the hills.

¹³ Meghna Guhathakurta, "Women Negotiating Change: The Structure and Transformation of Gendered Violence in Bangladesh," *Cultural Dynamics* 16(2004): 198.

¹⁴ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 39.

¹⁵ Chakma, "Women Invisible in CHT Accord," 181.

¹⁶ Guhathakurta, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord and After: Gendered Dimensions of Peace."

Then Bengalis and Adivasis are separated and Adivasis especially are searched. Women Village Defense Police gave hill women a body search. But, though as women police personnel they do not sexually harass Adivasi women, but they often perform their duties in very rude manners that humiliate Adivasi women.

Moreover, Adivasi women frequently encounter physical torture by army, for protecting their male members in the house, who are suspected as the spy or soldier of armed wings of PCJSS. For example, Kohima Dewan, one of the survivors of the physical violence caused by army said,

I along with my daughter suffered torture at the hands of the Bangladesh military.....The military was looking for my husband and failing to find him arrested me and my daughter. They confined us and tortured us during two days of interrogation. They poured powder pepper into our eyes. Later my husband surrendered but they restricted our movements.¹⁷

Security agencies use Adivasi women as a bait to attract the male members of the family. They know that Adivasi men will surrender to them, as communities' and family's honor are depended on women's 'honor.' The symbolic role of collective honor assigned to Adivasi women by their communities makes them vulnerable in a conflict situation where dominant Bengali group devalue Adivasi women by considering them as state's 'other.' As Adivasi women are regarded as the biological bearers of their peoples and communities, the dominant groups systematically conduct sexual violence against them to damage their 'enemy.' Because, by abusing women sexually, settler Bengalis and security forces do not just violate women's bodily rights, but also humiliate the identity of Adivasi people as a whole. This explains why rape and sexual violence

¹⁷ Rozana Syeda Rashid, "Women's Security Paper," in *A Comparative Study on Vulnerability and Coping Mechanism between Rohingya Refugee and Chakma IDP Women* (Dhaka: Forum on Women in Security and International Affairs Bangladesh Freedom Foundation, 2005), 53.

against women becomes an important instrument of Bangladeshi state's aggression.

However, women's experiences of violence do not damage them only at the moment when violent occurs against them. Rather, there are severe effects of violence on Adivasi women that shape their lives. In the next section, I will focus on post-conflict vulnerabilities of Adivasi women.

Post-violence Vulnerabilities of Adivasi Women

Compared to the conflict period, post conflict time is more unmanageable for Adivasi women, because their experiences of violence has changed their lives and relationships with their worlds. By failing to get justice, being alienated from the societies and their own bodies, going through psychological trauma, Adivasi women carry their experiences of violence in the rest of life.

Bangladeshi state and law prove over history that justice is not for minority people, especially for women. Adivasi women, who have been suffering for sexual violence, are far away from the path of getting justice at least for three reasons. Firstly, the incidents of sexual violence against Adivasi women remain hidden both by the government and by the Adivasi communities. On the one hand, government imposes censorship on news of any violence against minority groups, and even when they are publicized, they hide more than they reveal.¹⁸ On the other hand, to avoid social humiliation, many victims of rape and their guardians often are reluctant to disclose the matter. Therefore, both the state and survivor's family and community hide the incident of sexual violence and thereby suppress the possibility for establishing justice.

Secondly, Adivasi women do not get justice due to the lack of effective measures

¹⁸ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 185.

taken by government officials, civil society, and human right organizations. There is no provision for providing compensation to the effected women of violence nor is their any mention of rehabilitation or counseling of victims of sexual violence in the Peace Accord. Sexual violence in wartime or in conflict situations has been normalized and therefore, policies that are aimed at preventing it or punishing rapists are viewed as unnecessary.¹⁹ Indeed, the acts of human rights violations in the CHT by the security personnel enjoy exemption from criminal prosecution.²⁰ Halim claims that the CHT Regional Council, local government administrative bodies never took any effective steps to redress the violence that is being committed against Adivasi women by security personnel and Bengali settlers.²¹ The incidents of abduction of Adivasi activist and central Organizing Secretary of Hill Women's Federation –Kalpana Chakma – is a good example for state's avoidance for taking proper step for rectifying the violent situation. Kalpana was abducted from her home on June 11, 1996 by Army Commander Lt. Ferdous. Ever since then the Hill Women's Federation has been demanding investigation into the case and punishment for the culprits. As the Kalpana Chakma incident gained national and international media attention, the state tried to hide its violence against Kalpana by offering several narratives of her disappearance. According to Karim,

One version claimed that Kalpana had eloped with a Shanti Bahini (Armed wings of PCJSS) freedom fighter because her family was opposed to her marriage to him and she was now happily living in the Tripura district of India. Almost a month and a half after her disappearance, the 24th Infantry Division, the occupying military unit in the CHT, released a press statement in which they

¹⁹ L. Hansen, "Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 1 (2001).

²⁰ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 186.

²¹ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 187.

claimed that Kalpana was closely aligned with the Shanti Bahini and had willingly left her home to go in hiding to embarrass the army. It was never made clear in the report how the military had verified this information. A third version claimed that Kalpana had been kidnapped by Shanti Bahini men with the help of Indian agents and was being held against her will in India in an attempt to destabilize the political situation within Bangladesh. None of these claims or counter-claims were ever proven.²²

The abduction incident of Kalpana is neither an isolated event nor an unusual occurrence in the CHT. This incident is just one example among thousands in a long history of violence of state towards its ethnic and religious minorities, which demonstrate the state's inactivity in regard to establishing justice.

Thirdly, local communities and political parties also hinder Adivasi women from getting justice, especially in the case when Adivasi men committed violence against women. The report of KMKS, a NGO based in Khagrachari, claim,

In the CHT, conflicts between indigenous (Adivasi) persons, including disputes involving women, are arbitrated by members of UPDF or JSS. Nobody is allowed to go to the courts. In particular, they are the ones who settle cases involving violence against women, and local people are forced to accept their verdicts.²³

Therefore, Adivasi leaders' stance shows that like the state they also violate women's rights and retain male control over women. The Adivasi local male leaders do not consider women's issues in their agendas. In terms of dealing with the rape and other incidences of human rights violation committed against women, Shantu Larma, the president of PCJSS, emphasized on the need to exercise "political autonomy" by all the concerned CHT bodies. Among the political groups, it seems that the PCJSS and UPDF have been unable to effectively address the issue of violence and rape against the

²² Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," 312.

²³ Naher and Tripura, "Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women in Bangladesh," 8.

indigenous women. Occasionally, some assistance has been rendered by JSS and UPDF to victims of violence against women, but that is not institutional support.²⁴

Not only does the community fail to provide justice, but also Adivasi women, who are the victims of sexual violence, often suffer most for the alienation from their own society and family. For avoiding social humiliation, very often victim's family decides to send woman any other place far from the CHT or the victim has to reduce her social mobility. Victims are also forced to leave their homeland and their family by the perpetrators. One of the rape victims named Rupali Chakma, a 26 years old woman, described her alienation from her society and nature,

I have lost everything, there is nothing more to loose . . . I have already moved out from Rangamati (a district of the CHT) and now living in Bagerhut . . . Now fear remains an unpleasant part of my life . . . Closed narrow places became quite a threat for me. I had always loved walking in the forests. It could be said that forest was my life but it has now become like an enemy.²⁵

Rupali's statement reveals that rape and sexual violence not only displaced women but also restricted their movement and action. Rape disconnected women from their own homes, own people and placed them into an unknown locality. As a result, women becomes rootless, choose an isolated life, and being worried about their own security, they try to cope with a new, more marginalized social space, which ostracized them from their traditional networks. Often fear of being sexually abused forces women to give up their cultural identity. Many women, both who are abused and who are not, now are scared to wear their traditional dress as it makes them more vulnerable and increase the

²⁴ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 188.

²⁵ Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*: 51.

likelihood of sexual assault by military personnel and settlers.²⁶

Financial crisis also adds insecurity in their lives. Very often raped women loose their jobs, especially, if people come to know about the incident. This was happened with Nilima, a 22 years old Adivasi woman who worked in garments factory.²⁷ Nilima was raped by some Bengalis in Chittagong on August 11, 2005. When the news broke out, she was sacked from her job immediately and landed in a serious economic crisis. Her family members could not cope with this stress and they left her. Her own relatives also refused to stay with her. Being alienated from her family and fall in a financial crisis, she became a sex worker.

Survivors of sexual violence face not only the physical impact of violence, but also encounter psychological trauma in the rest of their lives. Being frustrated by failing to get justice of the violence that they encounter and being alienated from their social network, Adivasi women who are the victims of sexual violence often suffered psychological trauma. Women's lives become full of silence. They cannot speak for justice for their and their family member's security, even if they speak there is no one to listen their words. Being left by their close ones, they suddenly find themselves as worthless members in the family. Consequently, they start to hate themselves, blame themselves. Therefore, Rupali blames herself for the assault every single day, as she said, "Today I am carrying a disgraceful life; the reason is that I am a woman."²⁸ She felt her body no longer belonged to her; rather, according to her, it belonged to any unknown

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 53.

²⁸ Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*.

person. Her body became the marker of pain and turned into a lifeless object. The victims of rape often encounter loss of self-esteem, and loss of sexual desire. They have suicidal tendency for losing their dignity and both Rupali and Nilima fear that one day they will kill themselves. Several times, victims just forget to trust any other men. As Nilima pointed out, “I had a boyfriend. He loved me a lot. Now I will never get married . . . I cannot trust man now. For me all men are the same.”²⁹ So, Rupali and Nilima’s experiences tell us that a raped woman incorporates self-destructive behaviors. Constant fear, humiliation and serious restrictions shape their everyday lives and relationships with other and it is difficult for them to ever fully recover.

Very often victims of sexual violence fail to attend school, which affected their studies. Because of the psychological trauma, many raped girls are afraid to come in front of strangers, especially Bengalis. Therefore, their participation in school often decrease and their studies are affected. One of the respondents of Mohsin from Marma ethnic community, named Muima Marma, who was raped when she was only 14 years old and a student of class eight, described her experiences:

I lost three years in studies and everything else after that. I failed to concentrate on anything because I had nightmares even at daytime. I used to get frightened if someone came from behind me, especially if it was a man. I cannot forget the past, forget what I lost.³⁰

Several times victims families also restricted their attendance at school for their security. This has a long-term effect on their life. Being withdrawn from the school, they loose their friends, their “normal” childhood, and most importantly their future is ruined.

Therefore, it is clear that Adivasi women fall prey to sexual violence as well as

²⁹ Ibid., 54.

³⁰ Ibid., 56.

post violence crisis. Some researchers have mentioned about sexual violence against Adivasi women, in their works on violence against Adivasi people. But, most of the time they have equated women's vulnerabilities with community's susceptibilities and have failed to address the complexities of Adivasi women's suffering in post-conflict periods. However, the socio-psychological impact of torture, molestation, abuse and rape on the Adivasi women cannot be ignored. The effects and trauma are not always immediately visible. But, it does not reduce the severity of trauma in the post-conflict period. Rather, there are long-term implications for the individual and society at large, which are difficult to calculate.

CHAPTER SIX

INVISIBLE ACTORS IN POLITICS OF NATIONALISM

Nationalism by being biased towards the majority/dominant community (and) alienates the subordinate/minority communities, which subsequently leads the later to demand for separate nationhood.¹

The above statement describes nationalisms that have been emerged in South Asia in post-colonial periods. Nationalisms in South Asia, therefore, become the rhetoric of dominant group's narratives. However, as nationalism is gendered and sprung from masculinized hope, South Asian nationalisms become the narratives of the triumphs of national male figures. Women's questions in the agenda of nationalism and women's roles in nation building have been always ignored by male leaders. This chapter will explore the dominant narratives of nationalism and show how Adivasi people and women are excluded from these narratives.

Rhetoric of Nationalism

Mainstream researches on politics of nationalism in Bangladesh focus on the rise and fall of nationalisms and analyze the politics by describing the acts of male leaders. Researchers show that British colonialism marked the beginning of the alienation of the Adivasi people from mainstream political actions of nationalisms. Colonial rulers segregated the CHT from the Bengalis to remove the region from the turbulence of the anti- British nationalist movements in the Indian subcontinent. Therefore as Mohsin

¹ Amena Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 26.

claims, neither the Muslim League, which was dominant in the areas on account of its Muslim majority population, nor the Indian National Congress, made any attempts to incorporate the people of CHT in their nationalist agendas. After gaining independence, political unity constituted the basis of Pakistani nationhood based on cultural unity or forced assimilation of the entire population.² Mohsin shows that in the new state the West Pakistani political elite used their model of nationhood for the whole state. This politics of nationalism alienated the Bengalis and gave birth to Bengali nationalism. The Adivasi people of CHT, despite being territorially a part of East Pakistan, remained alienated from Bengali nationalism; as again the political unity of the population of East Pakistan was being sought by emphasizing Bengali language and culture. This becomes evident in independent Bangladesh too.

In sovereign Bangladesh different kinds of nationalisms arose in different trajectories of history. At different points of time the Bengali political elite adopted, manipulated and emphasized different elements of nationalism. But, the common interests of these nationalisms have remained same, which is to consolidate Muslim Bengali's dominance over minority ethnic groups. Mohsin claims,

In the Bengali secular model of nationhood, language and culture were the main tools in the hand of Awami League (AL party) . . . In the post-Awami League period, the political/military elite that assumed power discarded the secular Bengali model of nationhood in favor of the Bangladeshi model. This model had two variants. During the Zia regime (1975-1981) the Bangladeshi model of nationhood emphasized upon religion in the form of Islam, and Bengali language and culture. Ershad regime (1982-1990) de-emphasized the linguistic and cultural elements of this model and tried to give wholly Islamic orientation to it.

² Rogers Burbaker, *Citizenships and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). 1.

In Mujib regime, AL political leaders demanded that Adivasi people should identify themselves as Bengalis. Even in an electoral speech at Rangamati in 1973 Mujib declared, “From this day onward the tribal are being promoted into Bengalis,” which implied that Bengalis were at a higher echelon of civilization than Adivasi people.³ On the other hand, though in the Zia and Ershad regimes there were no quests to turn the Adivasi people into Bengalis, but they alienated not only Adivasi people, but also non-Muslim Bengali groups from the model of “Bangladeshi” nationhood by emphasizing an Islamic identity over a cultural one. In this process Adivasi people have been alienated, as both Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalisms have not created any space for them. This attitude has helped to crystalize the sense of nationhood among Adivasi people.

Mujib’ refusal to recognize Adivasi people as distinct community from Bengalis, Adivasi people’s absence in the narratives of Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalisms, and the persecution in the CHT had led to the demand by PCJSS, for a separate nationhood – Jumma nation –for Adivasi people. The word Jumma has its origins in Jhum, which has been the traditional mode of cultivation of the Adivasi people in CHT. PCJSS invoked this particular nomenclature to infuse Adivasi people with a sense of pride in their past, traditional system and value.⁴ Also, PCJSS created this Jumma nationalism for separating Adivasi people from Bengalis and submerging the inherent differences between Adivasi communities.

However, like Pakistani, Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism, Jumma nationalism also has created on the basis of dominant groups –the Chakma ethnic group’s

³ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*: 62.

⁴ Ibid., 191.

–ideology of “nation” that submerged other minority Adivasi groups. Jumma nationalism does not represent thirteen different ethnic groups in the CHT, who lack the common sociocultural denominators, such as, common language, religion, culture, social norms, customs, and history. Even several of these ethnic communities have hostile relationships with each other. Jumma is a Chakma word, it emphasizes Chakma culture. Moreover, as PCJSS is overwhelmingly a Chakma dominated institution, there exists the real fear of Chakma hegemony in this construction of Jumma nationalism itself.⁵

Therefore, it is evident from the above analyses that nationalism always biased towards powerful groups. Researchers have explored this truth in different works. However, most of the time they have failed to see that women’s issues are not included in the agenda of nationalism and women activists do not have any space in the politics of nationalism. As, nationalism by nature is gender biased; it ignores women’s rights and avoids women’s roles in national politics. Though it is true that the presidents of two main parties in Bangladesh are women they just carry on the legacy of Mujib and Zia. One of them is Sheikh Hasina who is the only living child of Mujibur Rahman, the other one is Khaleda Zia, who is the widow of Ziaur Rahman. Both of them were elected only because of their father or husband’s political influences. For Bengalis either Mujib or Zia is the father of nation. In the imagination of Bengalis there is no “mother” for the nation. These two women are considered by Bengalis only as the implementers of Mujib or Zia’s policies. In a same way, among Adivasi people Manabendra Larma is the father of Jumma nation. There are thousands of Adivasi women who are directly related with the political struggles of Adivasi people. But, they remain unseen in the rhetoric of Bengali,

⁵ Ibid., 194.

Bangladeshi as well as Jumma nationalism. They are invisible in the works of scholars, who see nation and its politics from male point of view.

Adivasi Women's Invisibility in the Politics of Nationalism

The invisibility of Adivasi women in the politics of nationalism and avoidance of their agendas in the narratives of nationalism are not an accident. Rather, both government and local Adivasi political parties and communities create this invisibility. But, what is the reason behind this? To explain why women's questions and women's appearance had remained apparently unimportant in the anti-colonial nationalist agenda in India in nineteenth century, Chatterjee claims that women's issues did not overtake by the more pressing and emotive issues of political struggle.⁶ Rather, nationalism did in fact provide an answer to women's issues. He said,

The reason lies in nationalism's (Indian nationalism) success in situating the "women's questions" in an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state. The inner domain of national culture was constituted in the light of the discovery of "tradition".

Though Chatterjee's point is appropriate for analyzing women's invisibility in the political arena in colonial and immediate post-colonial contexts it cannot fully explain the situation of Adivasi women in the context of Jumma nationalism. The growth of Jumma nationalism within the state of Bangladesh was a consequence of the imposition of Bengali or Bangladeshi model of nationhood upon the entire Adivasi population. Therefore, for establishing themselves as a separate nationhood from Bengalis, Adivasi leaders demanded for Jumma nationalism that requires women as well as men to secure their traditional domain and identity. Like Indian nationalism the interest of Jumma

⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993). 117.

nationalism was not to establish independent nation-state. Rather, the immediate aims of Jumma nationalism were gaining the recognition as a separate “nation” from Bengalis depending on its traditional culture and establish autonomous especial regional power in the CHT. To do this, nationalist Adivasi leaders have ignored Adivasi women’s agenda by emphasizing Jumma nation’s problems over women’s distinctive problems. Moreover, to establish themselves in highest political power position in the CHT, male Adivasi leaders have submerged the contributions of women’s activists in the political struggle.

Therefore, on the one hand, both the government and Adivasi local leader overlooked Adivasi women’s questions. Government has created National Women’s Development Policy, where there is no mention about the distinctive problems of Adivasi women. Moreover, the Peace Accord, that was signed by the government and PCJSS, also has failed to secure Adivasi women’s rights. The Accord has not done anything yet for increasing Adivasi women’s participation in the regional politics. The Accord makes no provisions for the overall rights of women. A specific case is Adivasi women’s right to land. In addition, this Accord has made no provision for the rehabilitation of the rape victims or domestic violence victims. The PCJSS has remained silent on these issues; even several times they have denied the importance of women’s issues. Therefore, we see Shantu Larma, the leader of the PCJSS to say, “I do not believe in women empowerment, once the nation is empowered women would automatically be empowered.” Moreover, like the local political party, several Adivasi organizations also have ignored women’s issues in their agenda. Kalpana, who was a well known activist and central Organizing Secretary of Hill Women’s Federation, critiqued the Students council for overlooking women’s problems. She claimed,

Despite the fact that women constitute half the population, they are not taken seriously in any movement for social change. As an example one can point out that the numerous demands voiced during the current movement, even the 10 point demand of the “Chhatra Shongram Porishod” (Students Revolutionary Council), do not specifically speak of problems faced by a woman! Many conscious men seem to think that such problems are not important enough to be dealt with at this hour. Therefore, the issues of women’s emancipation have remained neglected in the agenda for class struggle and political change.⁷

This evidence shows that the woman question remains subsumed under the national question, not only by the state, but also by the local Adivasi male leaders as well as Adivasi organizations.

The government and Adivasi political party have not only ignored Adivasi women’s questions but also they have tried to hide Adivasi women’s contribution in the political struggles. According to Mohsin⁸, the government decided that there would be reserved seats for women members in the Regional Council. However, among the 25 seats, 12 were male (Adivasi) and two female (Adivasi) and among the non-Adivasi six were male and one female. This reflects gender imbalance and male hegemony and disregards Adivasi women’s sacrifices and participation in the political activities. The local Adivasi political party does not object to the government’s decision; rather, it agrees. As there are thirteen ethnic communities among the Adivasi society, there are hidden contests among male leaders for the local political power. Therefore, for securing their power in the local political positions, Adivasi male leaders, who are considered as the “real” representative of the ethnic community, try to impede women leaders and activists’ involvement in the political sphere. Therefore, Larma mentioned in his interview that he

⁷ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 91.

⁸ Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*: 54.

is not in favor of increasing the number of reserved women seats in the RC.⁹ Moreover, inherent male biases in the organizations also obstruct women from their active and equal participation in politics. Kalpana Chakma claimed in her diary that there are male members, who do not respect other female members with the organization and dominate most of the organizations.¹⁰ She also claimed that overall Adivasi patriarchal society tries to hinder women's participation in the political sphere. She said,

Our social structure is such that if women start to become aware, everyone feels threatened. The minute she tries to break her chains, people call her immodest. When she participates in the movement, people say she is without character.¹¹

Moreover, the absence of financial help from Adivasi society and political party hinders Adivasi women to politically mobilize any movements, or to participate in the democratic processes in a substantive manner. Therefore, Adivasi women are still in the process of defining for themselves a space of their own both within their organizations as well as within their societies.

Despite all of the socio-political hindrance that Adivasi women are facing, they are fighting for establishing their own as well as communities' rights. Women from different background have been drawn together by the common bond of resistance against the repressive forces of both Bangladeshi state and Adivasi patriarchal societies. However, women's agency, activism and political struggles remain unseen in both academic arena as well as political field.

⁹ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 188.

¹⁰ Kalpana Chakma, "Kalpana Chakmar Chithipatra (The Letters of Kalpana Chakma)," in *Kalpana Chakmar Diary (The Diary of Kalpana Chakma)*, ed. Kabita Chakma, Samari Chakma, and Ilira Dewan (Dhaka: Hiil Women's Federation, 2001), 62.

¹¹ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 91.

Rising from Ashes: Unseen Activisms of Adivasi Women

By focusing too much on the victimization of women, the literature on women's marginalization commits further injustice to women by casting them merely in passive role. Feminist researchers now no longer confine themselves to documenting and analyzing instances of women's "oppressed" and "subordinate" conditions. Naher and Tripura claim that rather than representing women in a passive role, many researchers today highlights how women can be seen to exercise power in their own lives.¹² However, most of the researches on the CHT conflict situation have ignored Adivasi women's agency and activism. In this section, my aim is to highlight the ways in which Adivasi women act as active agents of history.

Adivasi women started to participate in the political struggle through the Adivasi women's organization named "Parbatyo Chattagram Mohila Samity" (CHT Women Society), which was the first Adivasi women organization. According to Halim,

On 21 February 1975, the "Parbatyo Chattagram Mohila Samity" (CHT Women Society) was formed. This was then part of the Central Committee of the JSS. During that period each village had a branch of this Mohila Samity, which was known as "Mohila Panchayet". The task of this Samity was basically to raise awareness among the women, provide ideas about the struggle, organize political schooling, inspire women on how to contribute in the struggle or provide psycho-moral support as women and so on.¹³

Apart from this, the members of CHT Women Society played very important role in the struggle during the insurgency period. The women extended their active support and cooperation especially in terms of disseminating information and carrying letters and other secret documents for the fighters. They worked and risked their lives as informants,

¹² Naher and Tripura, "Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women in bangladesh," 11.

¹³ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 194.

and got molested, abused and raped by the military. Even thirty five members of this organization participated in the military training for securing their communities from the aggression of Bangladeshi state.¹⁴ Among those members at least two members – Madhabilata Chakma and Mithila Chakma – have fought besides their peers, who were in Shantibahini, the armed wings of PCJSS.

Apart from participating in armed war between Bengalis and Adivasis, these women have taken several steps for the wellbeing of their communities. To establish Adivasi women as economically independent, Madhabilata created one of the biggest Adivasi textile societies in the CHT, which is known nationally. Moreover, she is struggling to establish Adivasi women's empowerment and their inheritance rights. Now, she is a member of the Executive Committee of the PCJSS and a regional representative of Durbar network, a national network that has created a platform for women from different backgrounds to work together.¹⁵

The other member of the CHT women's Society Mithila Chakma has fought in political field by fostering cultural movement. As a dancer Mithila emphasized the cultural aspect in the student's front. According to Guhathakurta,

She (Mithila) felt that if Adivasi were to have a different identity from Bengalis, then they must demonstrate it in their culture. So she started to learn the dances of all the indigenous people by staying with them and then taught these dances to a group of women. In this way a cultural troupe of the students' wing was formed by the name of "Giri Shur" (music of the hills) . . . Later they were asked to perform in the victory day celebrations in Dhaka. Mithila claimed that because of her endeavor the Government of Bangladesh was forced to recognize cultural differences and later appropriated it into state practice by setting up a tribal

¹⁴ Mongol Kumar Chakma, *Parbatyo Chattagram Chuktir Alope Adivasi Narir Obosthan (Adivasi Women's status in the CHT Acoord)* (Dhaka: BNPS, 2010). 30.

¹⁵ Ibid., 83-89.

cultural center, which was set up in Rangamati.¹⁶

Besides the CHT Women Society, there are other women organizations, where Adivasi women activists participate actively. Among them Hill Women's Federation (HWF) is the most organized and strongest organization that is raising its voice against all kind of women's oppression caused by both the state and the local patriarchal society. Hill Women's Federation was formed in 1989, which came into effect around 1991. According to Guhathakurta, the issue of rape and harassment against women by security personnel was the single most important factor behind the formation of Hill Women's federation.¹⁷ She claimed that the strength of the HWF lies in the effectiveness of their local branches that are situated in every sub-districts and universities. During the conflict period the women activists of HWF have openly agitated against army rule and oppressive measures followed by the state. They have organized rallies and demonstrations against the genocide of the Adivasi people through posters, leaflets and other media, such as art and songs. They have brought up the gender issue along with the rights of indigenous people. Several members of HWF participated in international forums where they drew special attention to the distinctive problems faced by Adivasi women in the CHT. It is the fact that several times their leaderships has been subsumed under male-dominated leaderships. However, these women members of the HWF never stopped but, continue their activism, even sometimes more efficiently than their male colleagues. The militant role that women often played in their communities perhaps best exemplified by the bravery displayed by their ex-Organizing Secretary Kalpana Chakma.

¹⁶ Guhathakurta, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord and After: Gendered Dimensions of Peace," 11.

¹⁷ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 88.

Kalpana Chakma was the first activist, who explored vividly the internal oppression of Adivasi women caused by both government and Adivasi patriarchal society. In her diary, which was recovered by few journalists from her home after her abduction, she claimed,

On the one hand, (the woman faces) the steam roller of rape, torture, sexual harassment, humiliation and helplessness inflicted by the military and Bengalis, and on the other hand, she faces the curse of social and sexual discrimination.¹⁸

In expressing her yearnings for freedom from oppression she used a magnificent metaphor,

When a caged bird wants to be free, does it mean that she wants freedom for herself alone? . . . I think it is natural to expect the caged bird to be angry at those who imprisoned her. But, if she understands that she has been imprisoned and that the cage is not her rightful place, then she has every right to claim the freedom of the skies!¹⁹

Kalpana not only believed in women's freedom, but also urged freedom for all Bangladeshi citizens from all kinds of oppression. She dreamed for a society where all men and women would be able to share equal status in society and where there would be no dominant community and class group.²⁰ She struggled for self-determination of the Adivasi people and stressed the need for the Adivasi youth to shake off the dominant social systems, which has descended on them. For her, democracy did not mean free and fair elections. It meant equal participation of all members of ethnic, class and gender

¹⁸ Chakma, "Kalpana Chakmar Chithipatra (The Letters of Kalpana Chakma)."

¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

²⁰ Ibid., 53.

group in the political process.²¹ Her voice rang against all kind of gendered and ethnic violence towards Adivasi women as well as Adivasi people and communities. She was abducted (also probably killed) by Army commander precisely because she was present in all movements and demonstration against the oppressor.

Although the fate of Kalpana Chakma still remains unknown to the public, she left behind a powerful legacy that other Adivasi women would embrace. She represented a new generation of Adivasi women activists who not only speak up against injustices committed by organized forces of state, but also take a stance against gender inequality within their own communities. However, several of these new generation activists are not only fighting in the battlefield, but also fostering cultural movement against dominant power structures. One of the indicators of this is evident in many of the protest songs and poetry written by Adivasi women activists.

One of them is well-known poet and activist Kabita Chakma, who raises her voice against state oppression. Her famous poem “Joli no Udhim Kitei,” –Why Shall I not Resist –tell us the state led ethnic violence towards Adivasi people and people’s resistance against the violence. The poem was originally written in Chakma language and then it was translated by Kamal,

Why mustn’t I flare up?
 You go on doing whatever you please –
 force me to abandon my home,
 turn dense forests into deserts,
 morning into evening,
 the fertile into infertile.

Why mustn’t I flare up?
 You go on doing whatever you please –
 force me to be an alien in my own birth land

²¹ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 91.

turn women into slaves,
eyesight into blindness,
creation into a halt.

I am enraged by neglect and humiliation,
Blood gushes tumultuously through my veins,
Repeated strikes will bring down the obstacles,
Sharpened by fresh awareness.

I alone can bring me fulfillment,
why mustn't I flare up?²²

Women activists in the CHT also have written down many protest songs and poems against their traditional patriarchal societies. They are not shy about raising uncomfortable questions about their own communities. This becomes evident in the poems of Lipika Tripura, who wrote:

When I pass by this woman's house, I hear her crying.
They are poor, and her husband is addicted to alcohol.
Her father-in-law is lame, and the mother-in-law blind.
She puts up with all hardships silently, yet she gets all the blame.
Her in-laws blame her for not being able to check his addiction.
But if she asks her husband to refrain from drinking, he gets angry.
He beats her up if he cannot get his drink even for a day.
My question to her in-laws: "What is the fault of the woman?"²³

Besides these women activists, general Adivasi women also exercise power, though in limited sphere, in shaping their own lives through their various strategies of resistances and negotiations. By doing their daily chores, looking for food, going to the market, Adivasi women strategically negotiate with the traditional family values as well as threats posed by state's organizations and settler Bengalis. One of the main strategies is to stay together and help each other in the crisis periods. In the absence of male

²² Kabita Chakma, *Why Mustn't I Flare Up?*, trans. Sajed Kamal (Dhaka: Narigrantha Prabartana, 2002). 5.

²³ Lipika Tripura, "Hamjwk," *Hill Waves: A Quarterly Literary Magazine of the CHT* 1997, 35.

members of the family, Adivasi women often protect each other's household and guard their house by rotation. They cook food together and take care of each other's children in the absence of children's parents. They learn this strategy from their childhood. One of the research participants of Guhathakurta, named Meki Chakma, informed that when they were children they were used to act as look out posts for their families and neighbors.²⁴ When they saw the army coming, they would run to their families or neighbors, to be on alert or to flee and hide. Children also used to help each other when they would go to school to avoid sexual harassment by the army. Sheila, a Chakma girl, told Guhathakurta that girls and boys used to gather at one spot in the village for defending themselves from possible harassment by the army.²⁵ They tried as far as possible to keep away from the main road in order to avoid military.

Therefore, it is evident from the above analyses and examples of women's activism that Adivasi women are not mere passive victims. Rather, they have fought in the battlefield with Shantibahini comrade; they are now participating in the political struggle for self-determination of Adivasi people, fostering cultural movement and resisting the dominant patriarchal societies as well as state power in their daily lives. These women are courageous, as it is not safe for women to resist against oppressors, especially, living in a militarized conflict zone, where their lives are in constant threat, it has never been easy for Adivasi women to actively participate in their political struggles. However, no threat, no violence has been able to stop them. They remain in the field with their courage to continue their war for establishing their rights as nation, as women.

²⁴ Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 80.

²⁵ Ibid., 81.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FROM MARGIN TO CENTER

There are debates about the solution of the CHT political situation between political leaders, Adivasi activists, Human rights activist, feminist and civil society. Most of them agree that the successful implementation of the Peace Accord will establish “peace” in the region. However, as the Accord itself is a gendered treaty and biased towards the dominant Bengali group, implementation of the Accord cannot be the final answer for ending the conflict situation in the CHT. Some of the critical scholars, and activists, like Mohsin and Guhathakurta, believe that to establish real peace in the CHT, it is necessary to democratize the constitution, confirm political representation of all groups, decentralize the government, sensitize the media, raise awareness among Bengalis and Adivasi, establish transparency of the military, ensure people’s security, and empower women for building peace. I agree with the second group’s demands, for democracy and the equal rights of all citizens. But, these demands are not new. Rather, this group has been urging Adivasi people’s rights for decades. Unfortunately, the government remains silent on these demands. The reason behind this lies in the fact that Adivasi people and their Bengali companions have failed to establish solidarity in broader national and transnational contexts to enhance their movement against Bangladeshi state’s oppression. I believe that to bring positive social change in the lives of Adivasi people, local resistances will not be enough. Rather, by establishing solidarity, that will transcend the nation states’ boundaries as well as the divisions of race, class, ethnicity, gender we can

end the ethnic conflict and hatred between Adivasis and Bengalis. This chapter will explore the problems behind establishing empathy surrounding on the issue of Adivasi people's rights and the possible pathways for building solidarity both in national and transnational levels.

Problems for Establishing Solidarity

There are at least four reasons behind the failure of establishing solidarity within Adivasi communities as well as between Adivasi, Bengali and transnational communities. Firstly, as I mentioned earlier that there are thirteen different ethnic Adivasi groups living in the CHT, who do not share common sociocultural components, such as, common language, religion, culture, social norms, customs, and history. Several of these ethnic communities have hostile relationships with each other. Though Adivasi political group has tried to bring all Adivasi people in the CHT under the umbrella of Jumma nation based on their shared experiences of deprivation and exploitation the rhetoric of Jumma nation has failed to address the fact that Adivasi people are not only exploited by the state but also by the dominant Adivasi ethnic group. The leaders from the Chakma Adivasi group, second to Bangladeshi government, make the major socio-political decision in the CHT. In the local politics Chakma are more visible than other Adivasi group, which becomes evident in the composition of the regional council and PCJSS. The presence of Chakma hegemony in the Adivasi sociopolitical sectors has shaped Adivasi people's movements against the state oppression, that often failed to bring Adivasi people from all ethnic backgrounds into a common platform by failing to address those minority communities' interests. The intra and inter-ethnic class differentiations also intensify the obstacles towards building solidarity surrounding Adivasi people's rights in the CHT.

Class differentiations destroy the possibility of establishing empathy between different groups through out the history. It is the evident within the black communities in the United States of America where class interest has destroyed the earlier community bonds and sisterhood among African American women.¹ Same thing is happened in the CHT. There is a rising middle class Adivasi group who works in the international organizations situated in the CHT. These international organizations, which claim that they are trying to “develop” the region, ignore those issues that are responsible for the political conflicting situation in the CHT. As the employees of these organizations the emergent middle class group also tries to apart themselves from political activity to secure their own privilege and the resources that they gain from involvement with these international organizations. Therefore, this middle class group is securing their class interests at the cost of the possibility of establishing solidarity with other Adivasi people from the marginal class.

Secondly, the social movement for Adivasi people’s rights has failed to include the agendas of Adivasi people and religious minorities from the area of the plains in their political demands. On the one hand, there are plains-living Adivasi people, who are struggling for the recognition of their rights over their lands that have left out from the political demands of Adivasi people in the CHT. On the other hand, religious minorities, Bengali Hindu and Christian groups, who experiences the second class citizen status of the country against the majority Muslims, also have been left out of the CHT Adivasi people’s agenda. By ignoring the minority people’s interests, Adivasi people in Hill Tracts fail to establish broader solidarity among marginal groups for bringing about positive social change in Bangladesh.

¹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Conciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

Thirdly, Adivasi people's movement has not built solidarity within a broader national context and as a result, has not gained attention from all over Bangladesh. There are many reasons behind this. Most of the citizens of Bangladesh know almost nothing about Adivasi people in the CHT and they feel they are not related with Adivasi people's problems. Some are hostile towards minority people. A significant part of Bengalis' mindsets are determined by dominant ideology to discriminate and "rule" others with some "concession."² Most of the journalists, human rights activists, researchers, NGO and members of the civil society belongs to this last group. The Bengali middle-class led organizations fails to engage with the questions of ethnicity and more seriously nationality. This becomes evident in several activities of NGO workers, Human rights and feminist activists.

Most of the NGOs hesitate to deal with national political issues. For example, we can look back the incidents in the Beijing conference. Although the National Preparatory Committee Towards Beijing, NGO Forum '95 constituted a separate task force on indigenous women, barely two lines were included on the topic in the summary of the official NGO report.³ Women's organizations also follow the same path of NGOs.

Guhathakurta explains,

After the CHT accord has been signed, while celebrating 8th march, International Woman's Day, the same Sammalita Nari Shomaj (Society of Collective Women) which has campaigned actively for Kalpana Chakma, turned on a group of indigenous women representing the Hill Women's Federation who had brought with them a banner saying that their struggle shall stop only with autonomy! The

² Anu Muhammad, "The Case of National Minorities," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 22.

³ Meghna Guhathakurta, "Resistance Politics in the Hills," in *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, ed. Naeem Mohaiemen (Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010), 84.

organizers of Shammilito Nari Shomaj asked the HWF members to put down their banner, as the slogan was “too political”!⁴

This shows that Sammalita Nari Shomaj had railed their support for Kalpana issue on the basis of a very abstract construction of human rights. Like them most of the feminist and human rights organizations involved with the demands of Adivasi people, who separate gender discrimination from the larger intersections of ethnic, class marginalization. Karim found out from her conversations with some feminist activists that those feminists could not support the territorial autonomy of Adivasi people, since the constitution guarantees the right to all Bengalis to move and settle freely anywhere in the state.⁵ In another group discussion with feminists in Dhaka, Karim found out that some feminists believed that Adivasis do not face any discrimination in Bangladesh because racism is a European invention. Though a few feminists challenge their peer’s ideas but most of them remain “obedient” to their nationalist hegemony. Karim’s conclusions provide some explanation of this,

It was immediately pointed out by a leading feminist and human rights activist that if racism did not exist how do we account for the differential response of the Bengali feminist community to the rape and murder of Yasmin (a young Bengali teenager who was brutally raped and murdered by the police in 1995; her murder was taken up by the feminist organizations in the country as yet another instance of the gendered violence of the state vs. that of the alleged abduction of Kalpana.) The response to Yasmin's rape and murder galvanized many more Bengali women than did the disappearance of Kalpana Chakma. The speaker's point was that there was more identification with Yasmin because she was one of 'our' own, whereas Kalpana could be easily othered as an Adivasi woman and/or as a Shanti Bahini sympathizer or a terrorist.⁶

⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁵ Lamia Karim, "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana," *Contemporary South Asia* 7, no. 3 (1998): 313.

⁶ Ibid.

Like human rights activists and feminists, the member of civil society also try to establish their “neutral” image by ignoring the complexity of the politics of Adivasi people’s rights. The civil society does not represent general populations of Bangladesh. Rather, it is constituted by the members of elite class, including the retired army officers. Therefore, an activist who identifies with that civil society is reluctant to raise his or her voice against the state’s violence. The civil society serves the interests of the government to secure their own powerful position within the society which prevent them from seeking justice for all citizens of Bangladesh.

Therefore, it becomes clear that though feminists, human rights activists, and civil society demand for more democratic space they are occupying the dominant ideology of national hegemony. But, for establishing solidarity between diverse ethnic groups, these activists have to recognize that serious differences exist among and between the subjects of the state, and they have to be concerned about the effect their ideology has on groups of people they are trying to fight for.⁷

Finally, by failing to effectively involve with other indigenous people’s broader movements and establishing solidarity with them, Adivasi people in the CHT remain mostly unseen internationally. The main reason for this is the lack of resources of Adivasi people to keep in contact with other indigenous people and activists who are struggling for similar causes. Though there is Kaptai dam in the CHT that produce most of the electricity to meet the demand of Bangladeshi citizens the CHT dwellers have limited access to this electricity. There is controlled access of Internet and cell phone in the CHT, which the government only allowed in the region ten years ago. Even now, whenever a

⁷ Ibid.

conflict situation arises in the CHT the government disconnects all Internet and cell phone connections, thus isolating Adivasi people from both national media and activists and international ones. Therefore, Adivasi people encounter trouble maintaining contact with international audiences which is a necessity for establishing transnational solidarity.

From the above analysis, it is clear that there are problems in different levels for establishing solidarity within broader sociopolitical contexts. Some problems exist within the Adivasi communities, while the others emerge from the ideological hegemony of Bengali nation. I believe that to establish Adivasi people's rights we have to overcome these problems and build empathy for the common cause, of justice, and equality.

From Differences to Commonalities

We live in a world where we have to face multifaceted power relations. There is no singular power. Rather, there are hierarchies of power systems, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, capitalism, and globalism, which work together to create controls on people's lives and bodies. We cannot deduce one from the other. These power systems make one group's lives more valuable than other groups. Through this "matrix of domination" differences are conceptualized as a range of interlocking inequalities. In this context, where systems of power are so pervasive and do not follow a geographical line, individuals or individual communities from a particular geo-political context are not strong enough to demolish these systems of power. Moreover, just as the fate of the individual is related to other members of communities, so also the fate of individual communities is very often related with other communities, both locally and globally. Therefore, to challenge the power system by establishing solidarity among communities,

the individual community is required to transcend the boundaries of nation-states, cultures, and communities.

I am arguing for a solidarity that will be transnational as well as national in nature. This solidarity has to be capable for organizing people from different backgrounds and nation-states to foster social movements depending on common political cause, and mobilizing materials and ideological resources within and outside the borders of nation states. But, as the broader common political cause has different features, images and meanings in different geopolitical contexts, we will not be able to follow a uniform strategy for solving different local political problems. So, this solidarity also will have to address particular issue and structure specific movement depending on particular sociocultural and geopolitical historical contexts. In this way, we will be able to set a common political cause on transnational level and at the same time we will be able to find specific strategies for our struggling against oppression in a specific context.

I am not arguing that by establishing solidarity we will be able to erase the differences between us. Rather, I am aware about the fact that there are crucial differences between individual communities and between individuals. However, there are also similarities between them. Because, differences and commonalities exist in relation and tension with each other in all contexts.⁸ Therefore, Mohanty argues that solidarity perspective requires the understanding of the historical and experiential specificities and

⁸ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003). 242.

differences of people as well as the historical and experiential connections between people from different national, racial, and cultural communities.⁹ She claims,

Differences are never just “differences.” In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining. The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully.¹⁰

It is this intellectual motivation that leads me to advocate solidarity among people who seek justice. So, by urging for solidarity, I am not contending that we all are alike, nor am I arguing that our blood, our color, our pains, our aims, our sagas, our dreams, our hopes and our struggles are same. All I am arguing is that there are some points where our different political choices cross cut with each other, and those points are the ground where we share commonalities, similar experiences. These points are the grounds where we will be able to create new social category –“strategic community” –the community that will not unite around any particular race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, but will have common cause for achieving strategic goals.

As all the racial, ethnic, national, gender, sexual categorizations have been made by interlocking systems of inequality, differences within and between these categorizations are conceptualized through hierarchical systems of power. For establishing a new “strategic community” based on common political choice, we have to go beyond these categorizations. However, this does not mean that as a member of strategic community we will not consider our different experiences that have shaped by

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 226.

social classifications. Rather, it means that as a member of new strategic community our political interest will be same, which is establishing justice for people who are being deprived of it. As a member of our specific group we will acknowledge our different experiences of oppressions and design varied strategies for fighting against oppressive power structure. This community bond has to be developed depending on shared political choice not on shared experiences. Shared experience can be one motivation for establishing solidarity, but we will not be able to build broader solidarity only depending on our shared experiences. If we only emphasize on shared experiences it will ultimately limited our space and hinder coalition building with those people who do not share our experiences. For example, if we just give importance to shared experiences then Bengalis may not be able to establish empathy with Adivasi people in Bangladesh as they have different experiences of oppression. But, if we emphasize common political choice then we may be able to reach both groups who share similar experiences with us and who are not, but seek an end to oppression. And in this way, a Bengali group, as well as people from other nationalities, who are not indigenous people but support establishing indigenous people's rights, can join together with Adivasi people in Bangladesh. Common political ground will be the starting point, from where we will be able to create our new strategic identity that is the prerequisite for establishing solidarity within and beyond the sociocultural and geopolitical borders.

It is true that in these very fragmented times establishing solidarity through creating strategic community is very difficult. However, when identities are so fluid that labor, capital, and militaries cross geo-political margins and oppressions and dominations transcend the boundaries of nation-states, then possibilities of this new identity and

solidarity are also viable. We can create a common platform based on our common political goal for Adivasi people's rights, which includes women's rights. In this way, we will be able to organize collective actions at diverse levels in fluid and flexible ways that will transcend the borders of nation-states. We will also be able to raise our voice against states, corporations and institutions of neoliberal governance and call for alternative values, institutions and relations.

There are several women's and indigenous people's networks that have already built partnerships with other marginal groups. Transnational feminist activism is mobilizing its force against neoliberal globalization, militarism, war and patriarchal fundamentalism for establishing women's rights.¹¹ For example, Bat Shalom in West Jerusalem has established partnership with a similar center established by Palestinian women in East Jerusalem, an alliance they called "The Jerusalem Link." This link is demanding an end to the occupation and the creation of a fully independent Palestine state as well as working to develop the relations between Jewish and Palestine Arab women within the state Israel.¹² The aftermath of September 11, 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 galvanized women's anti-war and anti-military movements. In both India and Pakistan women's groups joined in coalitions that condemned the massacre of American civilians on September 11 but also asked United States to take responsibility for the fallout from past foreign policies and to refrain from military retaliation in

¹¹ Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalization & Social Movement: Islamism, Feminism, and the Global Justice Movement* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009). 34.

¹² Cynthia Cockburn, "Bat Shalom: A Women's Group for Peace," in *The Space between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (New York: Zed Books, 1998).

Afghanistan which would very likely cause considerable civilian death and sufferings.¹³

There are some other groups –WIB (Women in Black), WILPF, Women Strike for Peace, Code Pink, Women for Women International, Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region, Medica Mondiale who are trying to “engender” peace, nuclear disarmament, and human rights.¹⁴

There are some Human rights networks, which are fostering indigenous people’s rights movements to demolish overlapping forms of subjugation of marginal people’s lives. For example, Survival International is trying to mobilize people from all over the world for protecting the Mashco-Piro indigenous group in Peru from the increased violence caused by the government, logging, mining companies who are trying to force them off their land.¹⁵ In a similar way, Amazon Watch has established the campaign named “Stop the Belo Monte Dam” for fighting against the Brazilian government’s plan to build the third largest dam in the world in the Xingu river that will displace twenty four thousand indigenous people in that region.¹⁶ In 2010, American filmmaker James Cameron came to Brazil to take up the cause of fighting against the dam and last year, more than one million Brazilians signed a petition against the dam in less than a week.

All of these movements are transnational social movements that have include “constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interactions with

¹³ Moghadam, *Globalization & Social Movement: Islamism, Feminism, and the Global Justice Movement*: 81.

¹⁴ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵ “Peru Struggles to Protect Indian Tribe,” *Aljazeera*, February 1, 2012
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2012/02/201221152019610835.html>

¹⁶ “Dam It: Brazil’s Belo Monte Stirs Controversy,” *Aljazeera*, January 20, 2012
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/01/201212015366764400.html>

power-holders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor.”¹⁷ These movements are targeting both states and global orders. Through these ongoing movements we can learn about how to create and activate global networks to mobilize pressure within and outside states, how to participate multilateral, intra and inter-governmental political arenas, how to act and agitate within and outside the boundaries of nation-states and how to enhance awareness and participations of people from different part of the world for establishing Adivasi people’s rights. Apart from learning the strategies for fostering social movements and building new community based on common cause, we also have to engage with these kinds of network, so that we can exchange information, understanding, resources and supports for helping each other.

There is a sign of hope for Adivasi people in the CHT, as there are some networks that are trying to build solidarity within broader sociopolitical context. One of them is “Jouno Nipiron Protirodh Moncho” (Platform Against Sexual Violence). This platform is trying to bring together people from different backgrounds, considering both class and nationality and including indigenous people’s movements.¹⁸ The goal is to establish solidarity on issues of gender violence that include sexual harassment, eviction of slums and brothels, environment policies of state and the politics of oil exportation. This is a positive indication that some of the issues connecting gender and ethnicity that were previously absent from the mainstream women’s movement are now being recognized.

¹⁷ Moghadam, *Globalization & Social Movement: Islamism, Feminism, and the Global Justice Movement*: 31.

¹⁸ Meghna Guhathakurta, "Women Negotiating Change: The Structure and Transformation of Gendered Violence in Bangladesh," *Cultural Dynamics* 16(2004): 206.

But, it is not enough. A stronger solidarity has to be built within and outside Bangladesh for bringing about positive social change. The strategic community and solidarity by itself will not override the forces of domination. But, it is the foundation for a broader coalition politics that will foster democratic government that recognized the human rights of all people.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

In the context of the historical marginalization of Adivasi people in the CHT, Bangladesh, this research has explored how mainstream researches and writings on Adivasi issues have ignored Adivasi women by subsuming women's distinctive problems within the communities' marginalization. Through this research I have investigated Adivasi women's subordination in diverse sphere of life and their activism against the power structure that mainstream researches have overlooked. This paper has argued that violence against Adivasi women needs to be understood by taking account of the intersections of racial, ethnic, gender, class marginalization that have been shaping their lives.

We have seen that Adivasi women encounter discrimination and violence not only as members of minority ethnic community, but also as women and as members of marginal class. The interconnections of different system of inequality have made Adivasi women's marginalization more intense and different from communities' marginalization. The Adivasi people of Bangladesh are ubiquitously absent as subjects, as actors, as agents in the national imagination; they are invisible in the administrative, educational, economical systems, and in the popular media. In spite of their invisibility in the mainstream scenario of Bangladesh, their marginality, their experiences are not an entirely untold story. Rather, the discrimination, deprivation and exploitation in the CHT have attracted attention of national and international scholars and audiences. But,

Adivasi women's distinctive experiences remain unseen both within political arena and academic field. On the one hand, they are sexually, economically, politically discriminated by dominant ethnic group Bengali and their militia. On the other hand, by living within patriarchal society, Adivasi women face gender-based discrimination and violence in all spheres of lives within their household and their communities. They have no inheritance rights, parental rights over their children, they encounter sexual violence within their family, and they cannot participate equally in their religious rituals. They join actively in the social-movement against all discrimination caused by state, but they are not the ones who take decision in social matters or in the household. Therefore, their relegated position within their own communities as well as Bangladeshi state establish them as a distinctive 'other.' Despite the fact that they have distinctive experiences of oppression, Adivasi women's sagas have remained almost unheard, and their unique marginalization, agency, strategy have remained mostly unseen. The state leaders, activists, scholars and journalists have alienated Adivasi women from those issues – peace Accord, land rights, violence against Adivasi people and politics of nationalism – that are considered as main issues for talking about Adivasi people.

Surrounding the issue of peace treaty signed by the Bangladeshi government and PCJSS, scholars and politicians have debated with each other on the topic of whether peace treaty is implemented properly or not. But, they often have paid little attention that how Adivasi women have become invisible in the journey towards peace. The CHT peace Accord is a gendered treaty representing men's interests as it completely excludes Adivasi women's roles from three steps of peace building process.

Firstly, in spite of women's unique insights for establishing peace, Adivasi women's active participation in the struggle of self-determination, and the UN's demand for women's participation in conflict resolution process, not a single Adivasi woman was present in the peace talk through which the government and PCJSS had come to an agreement and signed the Accord. Secondly, the language of the peace Accord does not specify Adivasi women's rights and distinctive problems, which is demonstrated in the fact that there is no provision for the inheritance rights of women and for the rehabilitation of the rape victims or domestic violence victims in the peace Accord. There is no attempt taken by either the government or PCJSS for increasing women's participation in the politics. Rather, there is gender imbalance and male hegemonism in the local politics that disregards Adivasi women's sacrifices and participation in the peace-building activities. Thirdly, the Accord does not mention Adivasi women's involvement in effecting peace building process in the post Accord period. Considering these facts, we can say that the gender question has remained unresolved both within the purview of hill politics as well as between hill organizations and Bengali civil society groups. However, very few researchers and political leaders have recognized that peace cannot be established without engaging the whole, rather than half of the population in the CHT.

In a similar way, researchers have failed to see the facts that alienation from land has affected Adivasi women distinctively. The Adivasi women have unique relationships with their nature and lands. They become vulnerable when the state alienates Adivasi people from their land, as women's security, mobility, livelihood, equal participation in the cultivation has always been structured by their relationships with their lands.

There are large numbers of army and other security personnel and Bengalis in the rural areas of the CHT, where indigenous women move about to collect water, fuel and fodder. Adivasi women are sexually and verbally harassed and assaulted by security personnel and Bengali settlers, when they have to go outside their home for their daily activities.¹ Therefore, being insecure in their own land Adivasi women often feel required to limit their mobility. Moreover, there are an increasing number of Adivasi women who become responsible to search for new means of livelihood both within and outside the CHT because of the absence of male members who either were killed or forced to flee to India. This exposes Adivasi women to new forms of vulnerabilities. On the one hand, they are deprived from getting a proper wage for their labor or good price for their product. On the other hand, they face sexual and physical abuse in their workplace. In addition, alienation from their own land and the presence of Bengali settlers and the Army also has affected Adivasi women's education. In the time of insurgency or in any conflict situation, when the family incomes decline then often the price will be the education of the girl-child.² Moreover, Adivasi girls who live in remote areas find it difficult to attend school, because there is always threat for sexual violence from settler Bengalis and Army.

However, Adivasi women also are deprived from their rights to land for the traditional patriarchal rules of inheritance. With the exception of the Marma Adivasi ethnic group, women in Adivasi communities do not have equal inheritance rights. Since men inherit the wealth and land of the family, in Adivasi societies men are more valued

¹ Halim, "Insecurity of Indigenous Women," 185.

² Guhathakurta, "Women's Survival and Resistances," 80.

than women.³ Their inheritance status within their own communities along with government's forced eviction policy and settlement of Bengalis in Adivasi lands have pushed them to live in the margin. Therefore, Adivasi women have to juggle between their own communities and protecting themselves from the ongoing war, the war that remain unseen within the domain of politics and academia.

Another unseen aspect of Adivasi women's lives is sexual violence. When researchers and scholars analyze state violence against minority groups they often focus on the general scenario of the violence and assume that it affect all minority people equally. However, the effects of violence on women have distinctive nature. Violence against them arises from within and beyond the ethnic boundary. On the one hand, Adivasi women encounter violence within their own communities. Their suffering remain invisible and unheard, as Adivasi women do not want to speak about the domestic or community violence to protect their families and communities' "honor." On the other hand, they encounter sexual violence by dominant group. We know that woman's body becomes the central point for national politics, for the internalization and intensification of masculine ethos that considers women as symbols of collective purity and honor.⁴ This becomes evident in the conflict between Adivasi people and the Bangladeshi state, where rape has been used as an instrument of war against the purity and authenticity of Adivasi identity.⁵ Among the many crimes committed against the people of the Hill Tracts, sexual violence such as rape, gang rape, molestation, abduction and sexual harassment are

³ Ibid., 84.

⁴ Naher and Tripura, "Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women in bangladesh," 9.

⁵ Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*.

prevalent. However, Adivasi women not only encounter rape, but also they are face sexual and verbal harassment in their daily lives by security forces and Bengali settlers.

Compared to the conflict period, the post conflict time is more unmanageable for Adivasi women, because their experiences of violence has changed their lives and relationships with their worlds. Adivasi women do not get justice due to the lack of effective measures taken by government officials, civil society, human right organizations, local Adivasi communities and political party. Adivasi women who are the victims of sexual violence not only suffer when failing to get justice, but also by getting alienated from their own society and family, who leave them to avoid social humiliation. Financial crisis also contributes additional insecurity in their lives. Very often raped women loose their jobs, especially if people come to know about the incident. The victims of sexual violence often suffer psychological trauma. Consequently, they start to hate and blame themselves and also start to believe that all men are perpetrators. Very often victims of sexual violence fail to attend school, which effects their studies. Therefore, the affects of sexual violence are not always immediately visible. Rather, there are long-term implications for the individual and society at large, which are difficult to calculate. The women, who are the victims of sexual violence, suffer most but the government as well as feminist and human rights organizations fail to understand the class, gender, and ethnic dimension of the violence.

Adivasi women are also marginal in the politics of nationalism. As nationalism is gendered and springs from masculinized hope, and is always biased towards powerful groups, both Bengalis, Bangladeshi and Jumma nationalisms become the narratives of the triumphs of national male figures. Therefore, on the one hand, both the government and

Adivasi local leaders have failed to consolidate Adivasi women's issues in the agenda of different versions of nationalism. On the other hand, to establish themselves in highest political power position in the CHT, male Bengali as well as Adivasi leaders have submerged the contributions of Adivasi women's activists in the political struggle and have tried to impede women leaders and activists' involvement in the political sphere. In this way, Adivasi women's questions have been submerged within the rubrics of dominant narratives and politics.

Despite all of the socio-political hindrance that Adivasi women are facing, they are fighting for establishing Adivasi women's as well as communities' rights, which are proving that Adivasi women are not passive victims. Rather, they have long legacy of activism. They have fought in the battlefield with Shantibahini comrades. They extended their active support and cooperation especially in terms of disseminating information and carrying letters and other secret documents for the fighters in the insurgency period. They worked and risked their lives as informants, and got molested, abused and raped by the military. Now they are participating in the political struggle for self-determination of Adivasi people, fostering cultural movement and resisting the dominant patriarchal societies as well as state power in their daily lives. They are trying to raise women's awareness and make them economically independent.

The militant role that women often played in their communities is best exemplified by the bravery displayed by their Organizing Secretary of HWF, Kalpana Chakma. Although the fate of Kalpana Chakma still remains unknown to the public, she left behind a new generation of Adivasi women activists who not only speak up against injustices committed by organized forces of state, but also take a stance against gender

inequality within their own communities. Several of these new generation activists are not only fighting in the battlefield, but also fostering cultural movement against dominant power structures

These women are courageous, as it is not safe or easy for women to resist oppressors who enjoy the backing of dominant groups. Especially, living in a militarized conflict zone, where their lives are in constant threat, it has never been easy for Adivasi women to actively participating in their political struggles. However, no threat, or violence has been able to stop them. They remain in the field with their courage to continue their war for establishing their rights.

I believe that individual community's efforts are not enough for bringing about positive social change. Rather, we can end the ethnic conflict and hostile relationships between Adivasis and Bengalis by establishing solidarity that will be transnational as well as national in nature. This solidarity has to be capable for organizing people from different backgrounds and nation-states to foster social movements depending on common political cause, and mobilizing materials and ideological resources within and outside the borders of nation states. Simultaneously, this solidarity will also have to be able acknowledge our different experiences of oppressions to choose different strategies for fighting against oppressive power structure.

The reason behind establishing solidarity is not to ignore the differences between us. The differences between us are important, because our different experiences of oppressions will provide us different strategies for fighting against dominant group. But, there are some points where our different political choices cross cut with each other, and those points are the ground where we share similarities and that will be the platform

where we will build coalition with each other. This solidarity has to be developed depending on shared political choice not only on shared experiences. I am not ignoring the importance of shared experience. Building solidarity based on shared experiences can be a possible pathway for establishing empathy, but we will not be able to build broader solidarity only depending on our shared experiences. Because, if we only emphasize shared experiences it will ultimately limited our common space and hinder us to establish bond with those people who have different experiences than us. But, by prioritizing common political choice we will be able to reach those people who may have not similar historical experiences of oppression. And in this way, Bengali group, as well as people from other nationalities, who are not indigenous people but support indigenous people's rights, can join together with Adivasi people's movements in Bangladesh. Therefore, common political ground should be the platform from where we will start our journey, the journey for establishing solidarity beyond and within the sociocultural and geopolitical borders.

I believe that if Adivasi people want to be the actors of their own histories and creators of a new world, free from all kinds of abuse, they have to be united and establish coalition with broader networks. Our primary coalition can pave the way for broader, more profound, more long range and more long lasting solidarity. There is possibility that we may not be able to establish any solidarity. But the important thing is we should try. Because like Martin Luther King I believe that "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adnan, Shapan, and Ranajit Dastidar. *Alienation of the Lands of Indigenous Peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Dhaka: CHTC, IWGIA, 2011.
- Altheide, David L. "Ethnographic Content Analysis." *Qualitative Sociology* 10, no. 1 (1987): 65-77.
- Andersen, Margaret L., and Patricia Hill Collins. "System of Power and Inequality." In *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. 61-86. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010.
- Bernhard, B. J., R. Futrell, and A. Harper. "'Shots from the Pulpit: ' An Ethnographic Content Analysis of United States Anti-Gambling Social Movement Documents.'" *UNLV Gaming Research & Review Journal* 14, no. 2 (2010).
- Bhavnani, Kum-Kum. "Tracing The contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity." Chap. 4 In *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser. 67. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Brubaker, Rogers. *Citizenships and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Burbaker, Rogers. *Citizenships and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Chakma, Chanchana. "Women Invisible in Cht Accord." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 181-82. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Chakma, Kabita. *Why Mustn't I Flare Up?* Translated by Sajed Kamal. Dhaka: Narigrantha Prabartana, 2002.
- Chakma, Kalpana. "Kalpana Chakmar Chithipatra (the Letters of Kalpana Chakma)." In *Kalpana Chakmar Diary (the Diary of Kalpana Chakma)*, edited by Kabita Chakma, Samari Chakma and Ilira Dewan. 54-76. Dhaka: Hiil Women's Federation, 2001.

- Chakma, Mangal. "Status of Implementation." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 47-48. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Chakma, Mongol Kumar. *Parbatyo Chattagram Chuktir Alope Adivasi Narir Obosthan (Adivasi Women's Status in the Cht Acoord)*. Dhaka: BNPS, 2010.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Cockburn, Cynthia. "Bat Shalom: A Women's Group for Peace." In *The Space between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*. New York: Zed Books, 1998.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- "Dam It: Brazil's Belo Monte Stirs Controversy," Aljazeera. January 20, 2012.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/01/201212015366764400.html>
- Dewan, Illira. "Women in Hill Society." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 190-91. Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Enloe, Cynthia. *The Morning After: Sexual Politics after the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California, 1993.
- Faiz, Sagheer, and Naeem Mohaiemen. "Peace in Our Time? (1715-1997)." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 26-30. Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Falguni, Audity. "Budhdhapudi Chakma." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 57-58. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Gain, Philip. "Researved Forests Complicate Land Issues." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 122-24. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- . "Women in the Cht: Some Facts." In *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, edited by Philip Gain. 94-95. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2010.

- Guhathakurta, Meghna. "Cartographic Anxieties, Identity Politics and the Imperatives of Bangladesh Foreign Policy." *South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 2, no. 3 (2010): 1-10.
- . "The Chittagong Hill Tracts (Cht) Accord and After: Gendered Dimensions of Peace." UNRISD, 2004.
- . "Resistance Politics in the Hills." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 74-76. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- . "Women Negotiating Change: The Structure and Transformation of Gendered Violence in Bangladesh." *Cultural Dynamics* 16 (2004): 193-211.
- . "Women's Survival and Resistances." In *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, edited by Philip Gain. 79-93. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2000.
- Halim, Sadeka. "Human Rights and the Indigenous Women: A Case Study from Cht." In *State of Human Rights in Bangladesh Women's Perspective*. Dhaka: Women for Women, 2002.
- . "Insecurity of Indigenous Women." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 183-89. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Hansen, L. "Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 1 (2001): 55-75.
- Hesse-Biber, SN, and ML Yaiser. "Difference Matters: Studying across Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality." Chap. 6 In *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, edited by SN Hesse-Biber and ML Yaiser. 101-20. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Islam, Sayed Nazmul. "The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh: Integrational Crisis between Center and Periphery." *Asian Survey* 21, no. 12 (1981): 1211-22.
- Karim, Lamia. "Pushed to the Margins: Adivasi Peoples in Bangladesh and the Case of Kalpana." *Contemporary South Asia* 7, no. 3 (1998): 301-16.
- Khisha, Pradipta. *Parbotyo Chattagramer Shomosya (the Problem of the Chittagong Hill Tracts)*. Dhaka: Sahitya Prokash, 1996.
- Marshall, T.H. *Sociology at the Crossroads*. London: Heinemann, 1963.

- Martinez, Elizabeth. "Unite and Rebel!: Challenges and Strategies in Building Alliances." In *Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*, edited by Alyssa Hassan. 191-95. Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2006.
- Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.
- Moghadam, Valentine M. *Globalization & Social Movement: Islamism, Feminism, and the Global Justice Movement*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009.
- Mohaiemen, Naeem. "Connecting Visible Dots (1997-2010)." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 33. Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Mohsin, Amena. *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.
- . *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*. Second ed. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2002.
- . "State Hegemony." In *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature*, edited by Philip Gain. 59-77. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development, 2000.
- Mokammel, Tanvir. *Teardrop of Karnaphuli* (Karnaphulir Kanna in Bengali), 20:50, 2005.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gMVb7e1hPnQ
- Muhammad, Anu. "The Case of National Minorities." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 21-22. Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Naher, Ainoon, and Prashanta Tripura. "Understanding Violence against Indigenous Women in Bangladesh." *The Journal of Social Studies* 123 (2009): 1-17.
- . "Violence against Indigenous Women." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 194-98. Dhaka: Dristipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Panday, Pranab Kumar, and Ishtiaq Jamil. "Conflicts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An Unimplemented Accord and Continued Violence." *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (2009): 1052-70.

- “Peru Struggles to Protect Indian Tribe,” *Aljazeera*. February 1, 2012.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2012/02/201221152019610835.html>
- Rashid, Rozana Syeda. "Women's Security Paper." In *A Comparative Study on Vulnerability and Coping Mechanism between Rohingya Refugee and Chakma IDP Women*. Dhaka: Forum on Women in Security and International Affairs Bangladesh Freedom Foundation, 2005.
- Rashiduzzaman, M. "Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord: Institute Features and Strategic Concerns." *Asian Survey* 38, no. 7 (1998): 653-70.
- Roy, Devasish. "Resisting Onslaught on Forest Commons in Post-Accord Cht." In *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, edited by Naeem Mohaiemen. 125-32. Dhaka: Drishtipat Writers' Collective, 2010.
- Sahlins, M. *Tribesmen*. NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Schendel, Willem van. "'Who Speaks for the Natio? Nationalist Rhetoric and the Challenge of Cultural Pluralism in Bangladesh.'" In *Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Willem van Schendel and Erik-Jan Zürcher. 107-47. London and New York: I. B Tauris, 2001.
- Schendel, Willem van, Wolfgang Mey, and Aditya Kumar Dewan. *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Living in a Borderland*. Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000.
- Schwara, Stefan A. "Ethnologie Im Zeichen Von Globalisierung Und Cyberspace." *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 129 (1999): 259-73.
- Tripura, Lipika. "Hamjwk." *Hill Waves: A Quarterly Literary Magazine of the CHT*, 1997, 35.
- Tripura, Prashanta. "The Colonial Foundation of Pahari Ethnicity." *The Journal of Social Studies* 58 (2004): 1-16.
- “Who are Indigenous People,” *UN Organization*. Accessed on May 15, 2012.
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf
- Williams, Raymond. "The Long Revolution." In *Theory of Criticism*, edited by Raman Senden. 414. London: Longman, 1988.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage Publications 1997.

VITA

Aanmona Priyadarshini was born and raised in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, she attended the Jahangirnagar University in Bangladesh, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology in 1999 and a Master of Social Science in Anthropology, with First Class First Division, in 2008. While at Loyola, Aanmona won the FULBRIGHT scholarships for doing her MA. Currently, Aanmona is a doctoral student in Anthropology at University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.